

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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INSIDE



Land of Sushi

There's a place on Middle Road, Gualo Rai where people from all walks of life and nationalities gather to enjoy assorted kinds of that Japanese delicacy known as sushi—the Sushi Land.

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Terror Plot

A third person separate from the two prisoners and documents previously disclosed provided information indicating al-Qaida was plotting to attack U.S. financial buildings, Bush administration officials said Wednesday.

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1,000-Plus Dead

The death toll from monsoon flooding in India crossed 1,000 Wednesday with reports of more than 165 people killed by rains that destroyed crops, flooded highways and halted trains across South Asia.

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Widespread flooding hits Saipan

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Monsoon rains that have been pouring since Wednesday dumped several inches of water on the islands, causing floods that stranded many motorists on Saipan, widespread erosion of soil and rocks that clogged drainages, and a small landslide in Koblerville. There have been no reports of injuries or casualties as of press time. It is predicted that the rains will continue through the weekend.

Emergency Management Office director Rudolfo Pua said yesterday that the heavy downpour loosened the soil, resulting in the Koblerville landslide. On Beach Road, Pua said several motorists were stranded Wednesday night due to flood on the northbound lane from across the National Office Supply to the American Memorial Park.

In Dandan where a Shell gas station is located, Pua said the flood reached up to two feet, washing debris—and even a 5-foot refrigerator—to the road.

The debris prompted teams from the EMO and the Department of Public Works to conduct clearing operations during the wee hours yesterday.

Debris were also scattered on the road across H-Mart on Middle Road before government teams responded to remove them, Pua said.

At the Sugar King area, rainwater gushed strongly downhill and damaged a paved road, he added. The rains also flooded portions of Middle Road, particularly across the Shell gas station in Gualo Rai.

See WIDESPREAD on Page 12



Flood closes San Vicente school

Heavy rainfall and flood took their toll on the San Vicente Elementary School yesterday, forcing school principal Janet Villagomez to cancel classes for today.

According to Villagomez, 29 of the school's classrooms experienced leaks from the roof or flooding due to the excess runoff from higher grounds.

The school's office also experienced major flooding, with the water level reportedly reaching almost a foot high. Even as the rain and flood calmed down, Villagomez walked into her office with about two to three inches of water remaining.

"It was just so bad. We even had to

turn the electricity off for safety. The classrooms were flooded and now we have a lot of cleaning to do," she said.

During the flood, students were escorted to the school bus stop located on higher ground.

Villagomez announced that all students are not to report to school today. She said, though, that teachers and staff must report for cleanup.

Villagomez said that several school supplies and books were damaged; however, the extent and cost have yet to be determined.

There were no injuries.

Oleai Elementary School also experienced several leaks but school

principal Celina Romolor-Route said that there were no major effects.

"The leaks are currently being addressed," she said. "A staff of the [Public School System Capital Improvement Project] was here to assess it, but I will also conduct my own assessment."

Kagman Elementary School, for its part, did not sustain any damage.

Meanwhile, Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela announced Wednesday morning that the Mayor's Office would continue with the road cleanup due to the heavy rainfall.

Tudela said the mayor's office

See FLOOD on Page 12

SHAN SEMAN
Heavy rain yesterday resulted in the flooding of many classrooms at San Vicente Elementary School, including the office of principal Janet C. Villagomez, shown in photo. Villagomez announced that, because of the flooding, classes are canceled today.

Multiple job regs take effect today

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The new alien labor rules and regulations will take effect today despite some reservations from employers, bonding agencies, and workers.

The high level of interest in the new regulations showed yesterday, when over a hundred representatives of vari-

ous sectors trooped to the Governor's Office on Capitol Hill to attend the public forum on the changes in the alien labor policy and procedures.

Attorney general Pamela S. Brown, assistant attorney general James Livingstone, the governor's legal counsel Steve Newman, Labor Secretary Jack Tenorio, Labor director Dean Tenorio, and Labor processing supervisor

James Ullua took turns in addressing concerns and clarifications raised by the forum participants.

The major point of discussion involved the provision allowing guest workers to hold multiple jobs and the new bonding requirement for hiring nonresidents.

Specifically, the business sector asked the government officials for clarifications

See MULTIPLE on Page 12

Hotel occupancy sustains growth

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Hotel occupancy rate last month increased to an average 70.87 percent—the sixth consecutive month that the industry displayed positive performance. This is a marked improvement compared with July 2003, when tourism was just beginning to recover from the travel scare triggered by SARS and the Iraq war.

The month's occupancy rate surpassed pre-9/11 figures from 1998 to 2001. Last month's average room rate of \$79.86, though, is much lower compared to those of these periods.

This developed as the CNMI tourism industry continues to show signs of recovery in the past several months.

Statistics released by the Hotel Association of the Northern Mari-

See HOTEL on Page 12

Local

cars unlimited

lottery

diabetes
+green

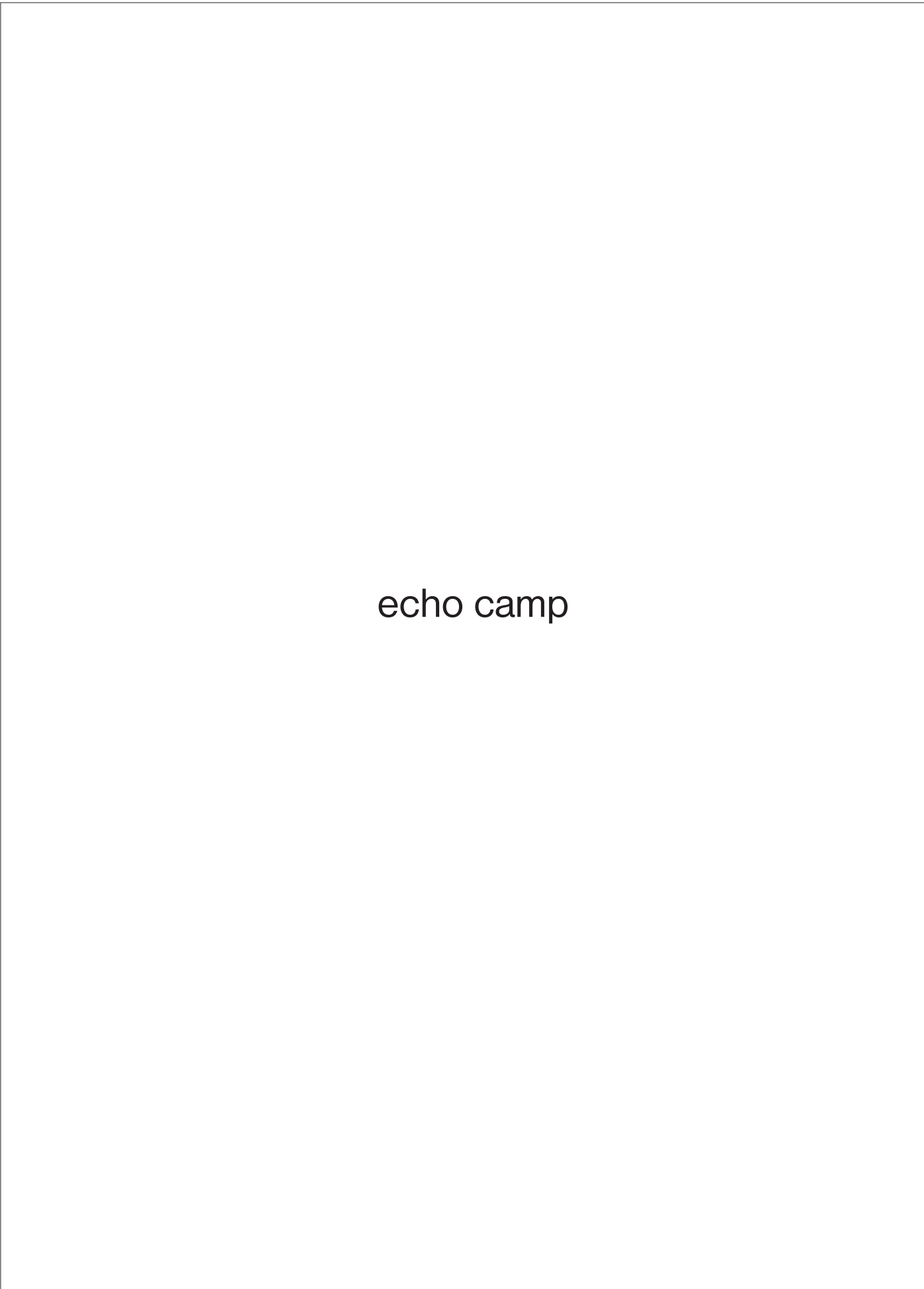
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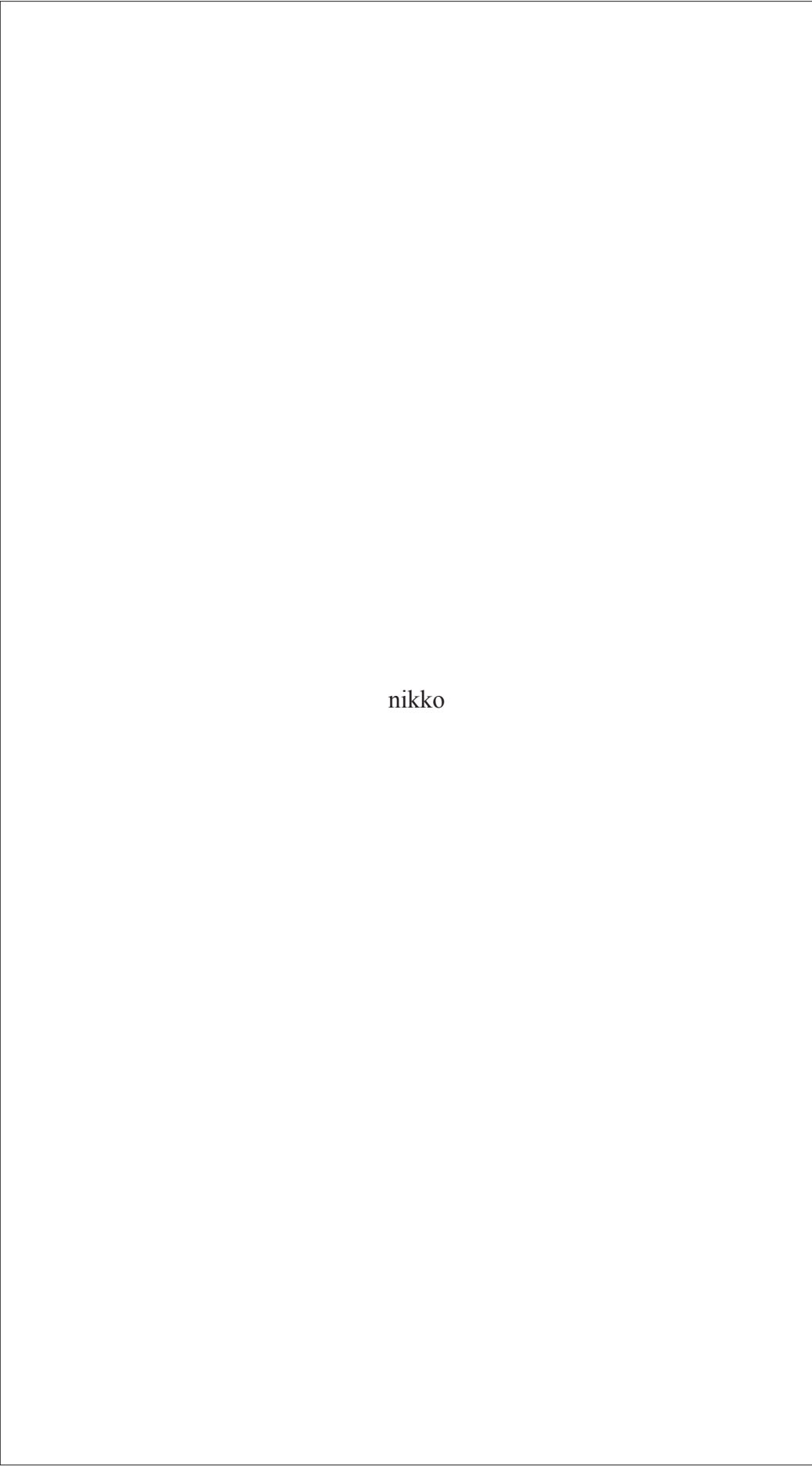
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joeten motors
cmyk



nikko

baby news

PTC HARD ROCK
MICHELLE BRANCH
CMYK

House minority pushes for session

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Citing the need to resolve critical issues, the House minority is pressing for the immediate holding of session at the lower chamber.

“There are a number of issues that need our immediate attention. These are crucial issues,” said minority Rep. Ray Tebuteb.

He cited the need to resolve pending measures affecting the land compensation, scholarship, and purchase of monitoring equipment for the Northern Islands.

“For me this seismic monitoring equipment is very critical. We’re talking here of a life and death situation,” he said, referring to recent reports by the U.S. Geological Survey indicating that the Northern Islands remains unsafe in view of unpredictable volcanic movements.

The USGS, which made a presentation before the Legislature and the Executive Branch on its latest assessment of the volcanoes in the islands, cited the urgency to install the equipment.

USGS said it would need the Legislature’s help to

lobby the U.S. Congress for release of funds.

The projects require congressional appropriation of at least \$7 million and \$500,000 in annual maintenance.

Tebuteb said there is already a draft resolution waiting to be adopted.

“A resolution is ready for adoption expressing the leaders’ support for the USGS project,” he said. “We really have to hold a session now.”

Tebuteb said that the minority has been asking the leadership to call for a session but to no avail.

“We haven’t received a re-

sponse,” said Tebuteb.

When asked, he said that he has verbally asked acting Speaker Timothy Villagomez on the possibility of calling a session.

“We’ve been asking the leadership since last week. So far, we’ve got no response,” he said.

House Speaker Benigno Fitial is still off-island on family matters. He is said to be back in a couple of weeks.

Tebuteb said, though, that a session can be held in the absence of the Speaker.

“There’s an acting Speaker. Several of us are here; we can meet anytime,” he said.

Alleged woman debtor in trouble

Police are investigating a possible theft by deception incident involving a woman who allegedly borrowed money and failed to pay it back.

Police report indicated that the victim, San Jee Rent-A-Car owner Kim Sook Lee, reportedly lent money on several occasions to Song Sim Pak, who reportedly verbally agreed to pay back the amount.

The suspect again reportedly borrowed money totaling \$5,000 and, in return, gave Lee’s husband a postdated check worth the same amount.

According to Department of Public Safety acting public in-

formation officer Captain Pete C. Muna, Lee was not aware of the latest incident and had an argument with her husband when she found out.

“Suspecting that something is not right, [Lee] did her own investigation and went to the bank to check if the postdated check has money in the account. She was told that there is no money in that account,” he said.

Further, Muna said Lee mentioned that the suspect left the island shortly after receiving the \$5,000.

According to the victim, they first met Pak when she rented a vehicle from their establish-

ment, and from there, became close friends. Lee said that she and her husband had trusted the suspect that they did not balk lending her some money.

The report showed that Pak told the victim the she had an account in the U.S. with \$100,000. She reportedly told them that the money would be transferred to an account on Saipan, and that she was going to pay them back the amount she borrowed.

The incident was reported at about 6:47pm on Wednesday. Police have placed the case under further investigation.

(Shan Seman)

MY WAVE Clubs to hold beach cleanup

The Marianas Tourism Education Council announced that MY WAVE Clubs from various schools would be conducting a beach cleanup on Aug. 14 from Sugar Dock to World Resort Saipan. Assembly time is 7:30am at Sugar Dock.

The activity—the first to be held by the tourism clubs for this school year—is being spearheaded by the Marianas High School MY WAVE Club through its advisor, Tim Faska.

MY WAVE Clubs were formed by MTEC in coordination with the Public School System to help promote tourism from the grassroots. Supporters include the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands and other members of the private sector, among them DFS-Saipan, Tan Holdings Corp. and Ernst & Young.

Everyone is invited to join the event and support the MY WAVE Clubs.

guangdong

Drownings prompt Guam pool closures

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—Government safety inspections spurred by two recent swimming pool drownings on Guam have prompted the closure of some hotel swimming pools.

The Department of Public Health and Social Services Wednesday afternoon identified seven hotels whose swimming pools were closed. Three of the

hotels had reopened their swimming pools since.

On Monday, Public Health officials started inspecting swimming pools at hotels and condominium buildings, said Public Health environment and health specialist Tom Nadeau.

“In light of the recent incidents at the swimming

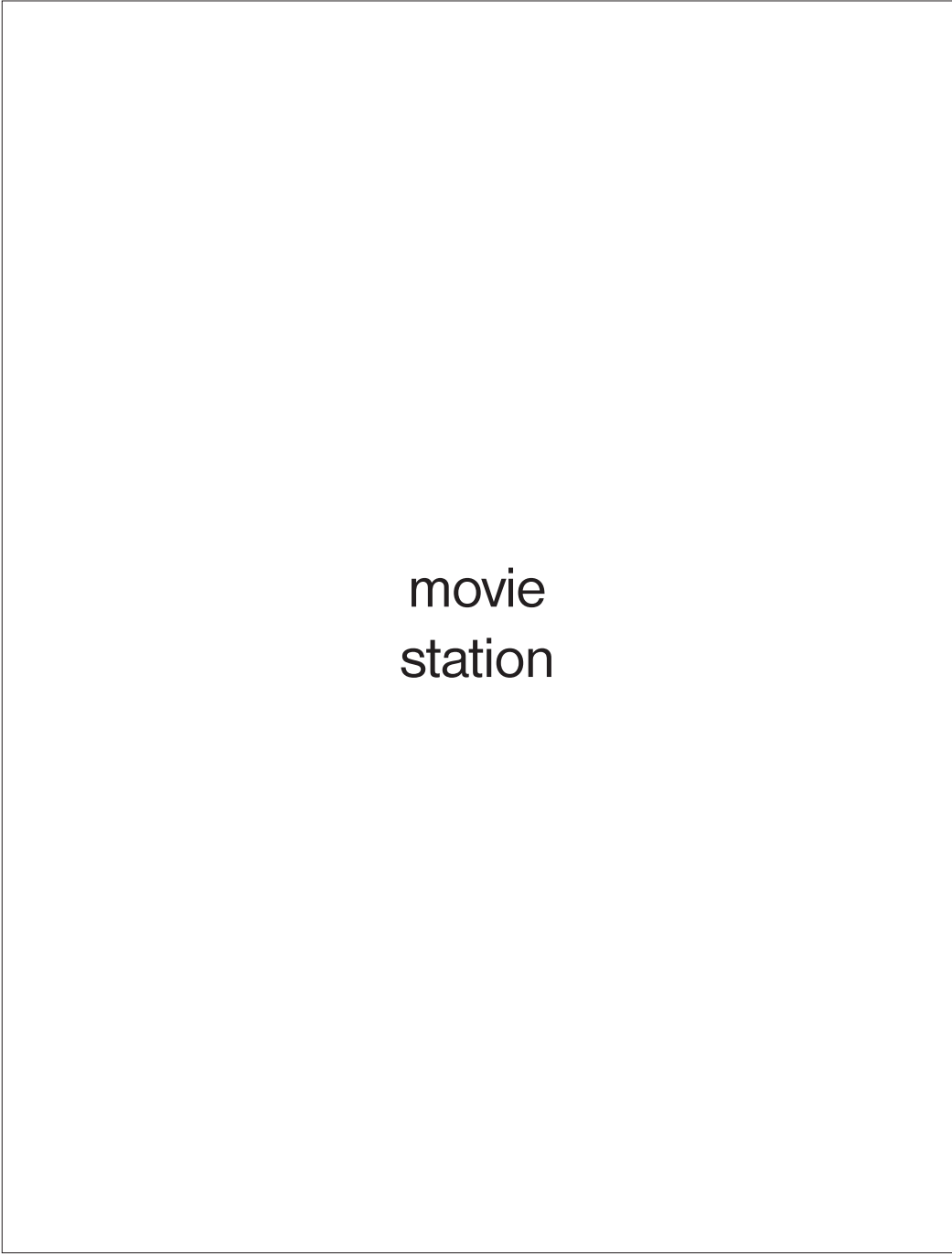
pools, we’ve had to refocus our resources,” Nadeau said. Nadeau said safety inspections have not been done in “many years” because of a shortage of inspectors.

Public Health has seven inspectors who inspect about 3,500 establishments, including restaurants, regulated by the department.

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Opinion

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Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

Same tired, old speeches

For nearly three decades now, we've heard tired speeches about (addressing) water shortages here. We're far off the mark from resolution because we're stuck in the mud of address.

The speeches are as empty as the water pipes emplaced in Garapan, San Jose, Susupe, As Lito, As Perdido, San Vicente and Chalan Kanoa Villages.

Then came a new form of government solution: establishment of a water task force to address water problems island-wide. CUC pitched in by planning to retain a consultant to study more water problems we already know. It's a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.

The basic premise is: islands throughout the Pacific have small water lenses or aquifers. Island communities suffer from the lack of water in prolonged drought season. It means far less water in aquifers to meet the growing demands of the community. But we've also employed Chamorro Logic by drilling more water wells around the same source only to pump brackish water during the dry season.

The obvious dilemma is the continuing expansion of this community. It needs more water to feed new residential developments, islandwide. The seeming answer is to proceed with desalination of salt water. Otherwise, we may have to revert to building more outside toilets to mitigate the lack of water.

Gentlemen, please spare us the same tired old intramural speeches that are as empty as the pipes in the villages, speeches that have been regurgitated for nearly 30 years.

John S. DelRosario Jr.
Koblerville

A response to Senator Reyes

Let me respond to Sen. Pete P. Reyes in the same venue in which he made his remarks (in the June 8 issue of this paper). Senator Reyes was unhappy that I did not consult with him prior to my voicing an opinion in my column, On My Mind (found on the web and in this paper's Sunday edition), about his reaction to the governor's veto of three of Senator Reyes' bills. The senator claimed that the vetoes were a personal reaction by the governor, and I disagreed.

Senator, I do not own a TV set. I get my information mainly from reading the two local papers. I often do call parties for information related to subjects I write about, and often obtain copies of, and read, related documents as well.

I did not do so in this case because, to the best of my recollection, in all the coverage given your unhappiness with the governor's vetoes, not once was any substantive argument included about the issues regarding Senate Bill 14-11, Senate Draft 1, which concerned DNA testing in paternity suits. There was no clue that the governor's reasoning was in error, and that your objections did, indeed, have factual grounds.

I know you are articulate, and do not hesitate to voice your opinion. Since I found no explanation of your position in the papers I made the assumption that, therefore, there were no real grounds for the position you were taking on this bill.

The other two bills that were vetoed—one, proposing to abolish celebration of President's Day so as to observe Martin Luther King day, and the other proposing to restrict Marianas Visitors Authority's hiring of nonresident workers—are both more a matter of opinion than a matter of fact, and there did not seem a need for further clarification.

I realize that there is a risk in depending on what the newspapers report and what they don't, on what approach they take. But I simply don't have the resources to verify every piece of newspaper-provided data that I use.

On the bright side, at least now, with your detailed explanation of why SB 14-11 should not have been vetoed, we may all understand what the real issue is. Indeed, perhaps it will encourage legislators to override the veto of this bill. It's a pity the explanation wasn't provided sooner.

Senator, I meant no disrespect. Our relationship has been a respectful one, and I hope it continues that way.

Ruth L. Tighe
Tanapag, Saipan

Why Reagan is a legend

If the Commonwealth had to pick a hero, Ronald Reagan would be a good choice. After all, it was President Reagan who conferred U.S. citizenship on the island folks, an act that has been followed by a gravy train of sweet moolah that puts the financial sucrose in the term Uncle Sugar.

Of course, if you go anywhere near the English-language media, they have soured the sweetness of Reagan's dignified stature by grinding in into mush with the millstones of Posthumous Saturation Coverage. Among all the romp in the pomp, though, I've gotten a lot of email questions from foreign readers, many of them workers or managers on Saipan, who are trying to gauge the American psyche on this matter. Namely, this: "What's the deal with Ronald Reagan? Why was he so popular?"

Well, that's a fair question. Let me see if I can cook up a fair answer.

You can't separate a man from his times, and Reagan secured the presidency in really bleak times for the United States. Not bleak as in crisis of Great Depression or WWII proportions, but bleak as in a vague and all encompassing despair, like a wet blanket had settled over the nation and was slowly smothering everyone's hopes. President Jimmy Carter just wasn't hitting the right buttons there in the Oval Office.

Inflation was roaring out of control, and I remember well those double-digit interest rates and the obscene, wealth-depleting costs of my parents' mortgage and car payments as they sweat the bills each month.

A gas crisis hit, and was countered with total incompetence.

And on the geopolitical stage, a handful of rag-tag Iranian yahoos holding U.S. hostages managed to geld Uncle Sam, while Carter looked like a deer frozen in headlights.

No disrespect intended to Mr. Carter, since he is a man of great intelligence and character. He just had lousy luck in Washington. And he had no knack for economics.

Still, lousy luck is, well, lousy, and economics is mighty unforgiving of messing up, and any way you looked at it back then, U.S.

Examining the local mom-and-pop phenomenon

Q •Hafa Adai! I look forward to reading your column everyday and one thing for sure, you are truly impartial and that I surely appreciate. I have a few concerns that I would like to share with you and hopefully will be able to see you address one or two in your column.

A good number of mom-and-pop stores are operating businesses in small spaces with very limited merchandise and obviously run and managed daily by family members or attendants who could barely communicate in English. It just makes me wonder; how and in what ways do such businesses contribute to the CNMI economy. Are they simply operating such businesses as a front just so they can continue residing in the CNMI? I am sure that their income verse their living expenses is a big negative. Or are they reporting their business gross income?

Certainly, I am pleased to hear of your great interest—like many others—in my Q & A column. My purpose for this column is to enhance public awareness on issues of common interest in the community. It's my goal is to build a strong enough pressure from a well-informed public to compel the policymakers to develop and follow a socio-economic development plan that charts a successful development path for the people of the CNMI.

Let me begin my answer to your question by highlighting the socio-economic significance of small businesses, the so-called "mom-and-pop enterprises." This type of small business is primarily operated by the owner and his/her family members. Small businesses employ almost 60 percent of America's workers, contribute 50 percent of sales and account for half of private sector output. According to published government data, small and family owned businesses represented 98 percent of all U.S. employers, generated the third-largest economy in the world and contributed 50 percent of the gross domestic product in year 2000. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy, small firms made up nearly 90 percent of all exporters and produced one-fifth of the known export value in 2001. For that matter no national political leader can afford to ignore policies aimed at addressing the issues concerning mom-and-pop enterprises. Thus, invariably every federal administration has declared policies to improve the economic security of small businesses, provide them help to meet challenges by improving access to capital, ease the tax burden, expand the opportunity of access to new markets, make technology and information work for small businesses and help them in implementing policies that value families. However, development of specific policies addressing issues of small businesses by our lo-

By **ED STEPHENS**

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"



policy—economic, military, whatever—was an utter disaster. Want to understand Reagan's popularity? You have to understand this first. It's a context thing.

And then Ronald Reagan appeared and he turned things around. The smothering blanket was lifted. The sun came out. Things got better. That's what happened. The details don't matter.

Meanwhile, consider that TV is the center of life in the USA, where the average American now watches 5.3 hours per day (yes, per DAY) of television. Reagan wasn't the first TV president, but he was the best. He was telegenic. He was poised. He had an obvious sense of humor. He was dignified, but not stuffy, not cocky, not glib, not pompous. He seemed bigger than the title of President, not the other way around.

He seemed bigger than life, really, which is why so many people were so shaken a few days ago when they found that he wasn't.

Personally, there were some Reagan policies that I did not mesh with. Not everyone in his administration was on my warm-and-fuzzy list. But, so what? He was still a great among greats. In fact, in contemplating the man's legacy, perhaps the best reflection on him is who his shrill and vocal enemies are. If screeching neurotics, child molesters, and welfare queens go apoplectic at the mention of his name...well....that puts points in Reagan's favor right there.

Ronald Reagan is an American legend, who was legendarily good to the people of the Commonwealth, too.

By **MOHAMMAD ASHRAF, PH.D.**

Ashraf is an International Resource Economist. He is solely responsible for the views expressed in this column and doesn't represent the views of Saipan Tribune. His email address is ashmdr@hotmail.com



cal government may yet be in its infancy.

Further, I will mention some specific steps taken under the Clinton administration where the Small Business Administration doubled its loan volume to small businesses in three years. With no drop in loans to other business owners, the number of guaranteed loans to women-owned businesses was quadrupled. The 1993 Economic Plan made 90 percent of small businesses eligible for tax relief, helping them to keep money needed for growth. Also, targeted tax preference for capital gains, reduced record keeping requirements, raised the small business expense limit for equipment by 75 percent and extended the Research and Experimentation Tax Credit, reduced the burden of regulatory enforcement, overhauled export controls, and made it easier for small firms to do business with the federal government during the same time.

Similar policies such as tax write-offs for small businesses recently enacted by the Minimum Wage Increase Act, regulatory relief and reduction in paperwork requirements, easier access to needed capital, provision of health care insurance and retirement savings plans for employers and employees are continuing under the current administration of President Bush.

Why are mom-and-pop or family businesses more appreciated by the community, compared with the bigger chain store businesses? The reasons include the effectiveness of family teams, positive customer perceptions of family ownership, willingness of family members to sacrifice for their enterprise, trust among family members, commitment to integrity and reputation, family support and more. Family businesses enable people to work hard for something more important than either opportunity or ego and that's family reputation.

Among the economic benefits of these businesses, studies show that the externally owned firms tend to purchase products from distant suppliers and channel profits to distant owners in other regions, thus generating smaller local multiplier effects than homegrown businesses. The addition of one new small firm results in an overall

See EXAMINING on Page 8

Legislature may push for \$213M budget

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

A joint legislative committee reviewing the Babauta administration's proposed \$226-million appropriation for 2005 has so far reached a consensus to keep the annual budget at the current level of \$213 million, according to Senate Vice President Diego M. Songao.

In an interview yesterday, Songao said that members of the joint panel "pretty much agree on that [\$213 million]."

"We're looking at \$213 million. We're quite comfortable with that figure," he said.

He said, though, that the Senate may agree to a bigger budget, considering a projected collection of up to \$6 million in anticipation of the passage of House Bill 14-180.

"On the Senate side, we're looking at a bigger budget," he said. The budget bill has passed the House and

is now pending at the Senate.

"Looking at \$213 [million], which does not include that [projected collection] yet, we can [even] bump up the budget to a little more than \$213 million," he said.

The House-approved H.B. 14-180, which seeks to repeal 4 CMC Division 1 Sections 1102 through 6 of Chapters 1, 8, and 9 of the Commonwealth Code, aims to provide a detailed administrative provision necessary for the application and enforcement of general revenue and taxation laws, including liens, levies, examinations, and summons.

Senate President Joaquin Adriano, for his part, said that a \$213 million budget "is more than acceptable this time."

"I think it's the highest we can go for now," he said.

The Senate leadership said that, should government collection exceed the budget, the Legislature could always provide a supplemental appropriation.

"Lawmakers say that we should

stay with \$213 million. If we generate more, then we'd make a supplemental budget," Songao said.

Meantime, the Senate Vice President expressed opposition to the administration's cost reduction plan, saying it would affect many people who have not gotten their lump sum bonus, annual increments, and other compensation from the government.

"Reduction of costs should not be done at this time. Suspending it for one year as proposed is not good. People have not been getting their money for a year now, so I totally disagree with that," he said.

As to the administration's proposed revenue enhancement plan, he said: "I agree with some and I don't agree with some."

He said he agrees with the occupancy tax increase, reduction of tax rebate by 10 percent, and vehicle related fee increase.

The administration's integrated fiscal plan aims to generate over \$21 million in revenues for next fiscal year.

PSS welcomes 51 new teachers, more expected

By **SHAN SEMAN**
REPORTER

About 51 new teachers were hired for public schools for school year 2004-2005. The number is, however, expected to increase as several more applications are being reviewed, according to the Public School System.

Assistant human resources officer Marisol Sonoda said yesterday that with the addition of the newly hired teachers, the total number of teachers currently within public schools in the Commonwealth is currently at 589.

"We still have several applications that are being processed," she said. "Applicants are still being interviewed and assessment is still being done."

An orientation was held last Friday for the newly hired teachers.

Sonoda said that several schools are still in need of teachers, including Rota High School, Tinian Jr.-Sr. High School, and Garapan Elementary School, among others.

The PSS earlier proposed an increase in Consolidated Grant funds for next school year to support acquiring an additional 65 teachers in hopes of posting a 20:1 student-teacher ratio.

So far this year, a total of 11,213 students have enrolled in public schools, a 5.9 percent increase compared with last year's, which posted 10,581.

Based on the data given—total number of teachers and total number of students per school—five schools exceed the student-teacher ratio desired by the PSS. However, the ratios may be different within each grade level of the school as some classes may have a higher number of students compared with other classes.

Based on the data provided, the five schools that exceed the desired student-teacher ratio are Saipan Southern High School, Chacha Oceanview Junior High School, Kagman Elementary School, Kagman High School, and Marianas High School.

With 794 students and 32 teachers,

the current ratio at SSSH is 24:1, while the ratio at Chacha Junior High is 23:1. The remaining three schools each post ratios of 21 students to 1 teacher.

Two other schools, Dandan and Koblerville elementary schools, post student-teacher ratios of 20:1.

Other schools include Garapan Elementary School, with 19:1; San Antonio Elementary School, 18:1; Tinian and William S. Reyes elementary schools, 17:1; Sinapalo Elementary School, 16:1; Oleai Elementary School, 14:1; Gregorio T. Camacho and Tanapag elementary schools, 13:1; Tinian Jr.-High School and Rota Junior High School, also with 13:1; and Rota High School, 11:1.

Meanwhile, Sonoda said yesterday that the PSS lost about 60 teachers after last school year.

PSS was granted about \$9.8 million in Consolidated Grants from the U.S. Department of Education for this school year—which started this Monday—and is seeking a little over \$10 million for next school year.

WIDESPREAD

From Page 1

Pua advised motorists plying Saipan's thoroughfares to take extra precaution, as rainy weather is expected to continue through the weekend.

FEMA team arriving

Some 12 to 20 representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency were set to arrive on Saipan last night, according to Vicky Villagomez, the Governor's Authorized Representative.

FEMA's coordinating officer William Lokey arrived on-island earlier this week following President Bush's declaration of the Commonwealth as a major disaster area due to the onslaught of Typhoon Tingting. Deputy federal coordinating officer Libby Turner is now on-island, while Lokey flew to

Guam, another disaster area.

Villagomez said the FEMA representatives would document the damage caused by Tingting, which had its closest approach on Saipan last June 28.

CNMI and FEMA representatives would sign an agreement outlining the extent of federal disaster assistance that would be made available to the CNMI pursuant to the presidential disaster declaration.

A joint preliminary damage assessment earlier conducted by the CNMI and the FEMA estimated damage on Saipan and Tinian to reach over \$2.53 million.

SBA processes disaster loans

The U.S. Small Business Administration has received at least 20 applications for disaster loans on Saipan, most of them

for rehabilitation of damaged houses.

SBA loan officer Steve E. Cockrum, who will be at the temporary SBA center at the Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe until Aug. 21, said only 20 so far have submitted their applications, although up to 140 people have trooped to the center since Friday.

Cockrum said 19 of the applicants claim damage to residences. One of the applicants is a catering business, which is seeking funds to replace damaged assets and recover economic injury.

"Most of the applications will be processed two to three weeks from the date the application is submitted," Cockrum said. "We're encouraging everyone to have their application back here before the 21st [of August]."

Those who fail to submit their applications at the center by Aug. 21 would have to turn them in to the SBA's regional headquarters in Sacramento, California.

that industry players are raking in huge profits. He said hotels are forced to lower their room rates to attract guests.

HANMI statistics represents over 2,500 rooms in 14 Saipan hotels—Hotel Regency Saipan, Hotel Nikko Saipan, Dai-Ichi Hotel, Pacific Islands Club, World Resort Saipan, Saipan Grand Hotel, Marianas Resort Hotel, Aqua Resort Club, Aquarius Beach Tower, Coral Ocean Point, Century Hotel, Chalan Kanoa Beach Club, Saipan Ocean View Hotel, and Pacific Gardenia Hotel.

Shell hikes gas prices for 6th time

By **JOHN RAVELO**
REPORTER

Shell gas stations on Saipan raised gallon prices of gasoline by four cents beginning midnight yesterday—the company's sixth round of price hike since January this year. This resulted in a cumulative price adjustment of 29 cents a gallon.

Shell's decision followed that of Mobil, which reportedly hiked gas prices at the same rate. The new batch of price increases was Mobil's seventh this year.

Phil Stalker, Shell Marianas Inc.'s vice president for Finance, said market forces prompted the company to raise anew the retail prices of gasoline.

"The wholesale prices of oil and refined product have increased significantly over the last 90 days. Market forces in Asia have forced a significant increase in the cost of refined product," Stalker said.

The 4-cent hike applies to self-serve rates for premium, regular and diesel gasoline, Shell said in a media release.

"As we have stated before, when market conditions improve and prices at the wholesale level ease, we will lower prices at the pump for our customers," Stalker said. No price rollback has taken place so far this year.

Shell stations now peg regular and premium gasoline's gallon prices at \$2.469 and \$2.569, respectively, at self-serve rate. Shell also raised the gallon price of diesel to \$2.569.

The new round of price increases by Shell is its sixth for the year. It first raised gallon prices by 7 cents in January, before increasing them again by 5 cents three times, and then 3 cents two months ago, before the new 4-cent hike. Shell's cumulative gallon price adjustment for the year has now reached at least 29 cents.

Mobil, meanwhile, has raised pump prices seven times since January this year, increasing gallon prices first by 3 cents, and then 4 cents, before taking on four rounds of 5-cent adjustments and the new 4-cent hike. The price increases resulted in a cumulative gallon price adjustment of 31 cents this year.

MULTIPLE

From Page 1

regarding employer liability over a worker who engages in secondary employment. In response, Brown strongly urged employers who share a worker to draft a comprehensive memorandum of understanding addressing any division of responsibilities for medical, board, lodging, and repatriation expenses of the nonresident worker; scheduling; and other agreements.

She also maintained that each employer is liable for all medical expenses resulting from any injury or illness that the worker incurs within their respective scope of employment. However, in the event that the worker gets injured outside of work, both employers will be liable for the medical expenses, which will be divided on a pro-rated basis—or depending on the number of hours that the employee works for each employer.

During the forum, a Saipan resident reiterated a concern of some local workers that by giving guest workers an opportunity to take more than one job, the new regulations might take away jobs from the residents.

But Livingstone maintained that a lot of effort has been done to ensure that the new regulations protect the local people's right to hiring preference. He cited that the amended rules, for instance, increase the advertising amount required from hiring businesses. Aside from putting out a newspaper advertisement, employers will also be required to post job vacancy announcement at designated areas throughout the island.

Further, Dean Tenorio said the new rules require employers to include all the benefits and incentives they offer their employees.

"Employers cannot just say that you give a salary of \$3.05 per hour in your JVA. They have to list down allowance for housing, travel and all other ben-

efits. With that, we hope many more locals will be interested in applying for jobs now," he said.

For their part, the bonding agencies expressed concern about the new policy increasing the bonding requirement from the equivalent of three months' salary to six months' salary.

A bonding company representative said they have yet to hear from their regulating body—the Insurance Commissioner—on the specifics of how to go about the new labor rules.

Brown admitted that the new policy may cause a problem, as most bonding companies in the CNMI are "undercapitalized." But she said the Labor Department and her office are now working with the Insurance Commissioner in promulgating procedures to implement the new bonding requirement. She also announced plans to organize another forum next week to address bonding-related issues.

Despite these concerns, however, Brown maintained that the scheduled implementation of the new labor regulations will push through today.

She noted that the Labor Department will start accepting applications for secondary employment starting today. But she stressed that it may be "foolish" for employers to submit applications without first completing the required documents.

Brown noted that certification of a job vacancy announcement—which is one of the requirements—takes a minimum of 15 days. She added that turning in an incomplete application is not advisable, as the new regulations impose a \$5 fine for each day that an employer fails to correct the deficiency.

Further, the forms necessary for filing have not been printed. The Labor Department said that for the first few weeks, secondary employment applicants may need to file forms that will be modified or created by the department to temporarily meet their needs.

now it's almost done," said Tudela.

The Mayor's Office has been working to clear out the roads that were filled with corals and rocks brought by the floods.

"Some of [the people] called and said that they cannot get out of their car, so we had to remove those rocks. Now that the flooding is back we have to go back again [and help]," said Tudela. *(Shan Seman and Cassie Fejeran)*

HOTEL

From Page 1

anas showed that last month's occupancy significantly went up from July 2003's 59.53 percent. The figure also surpassed the July 2002 figure of 67.87 percent.

Pre-9/11 hotel occupancy levels for the same month only registered at 51.89 percent in 1998, 59.65 percent in 1999, 62.08 in 2000, and 57.40 percent in 2001.

HANMI statistics showed that the average room rate for the month

slightly increased from July 2003's \$79.25, but lower than pre- and post-9/11 levels until 2002.

Average room rate for the month of July was at its peak in 1997 when it reached \$145.17. The rate went down the three-digit mark for the first time in 2000, when HANMI recorded an average \$90.56. The figure went up to \$92.24 in 2001 before dropping to \$80.85 in 2002.

HANMI chair Ronald D. Sablan said last month that, although hotel occupancy on the islands continue to improve, it does not necessarily indicate

Continental’s furloughed flight attendants recalled

Continental Micronesia will begin daily non-stop service between Nagoya, Japan, and Honolulu, Hawaii, on Dec. 21, 2004, pending government approval. In anticipation of the new service Continental Micronesia will recall up to 45 Guam-based flight attendants from furlough.

Continental Flight 904 will leave Nagoya at 8pm and arrive in Honolulu at 8am the same day. Continental Flight 905 will depart Honolulu at 2:15pm and arrive in Nagoya at 6:45pm the following day.

The new service will further expand the airline’s Asia-Pacific network, meeting strong demands from passengers and travel agents in the Nagoya and Chubu regions for this popular route.

Continental currently operates 52 weekly flights between seven Japanese cities (Sapporo, Sendai, Niigata, Tokyo, Nagoya, Okayama and Fukuoka) and Guam, and 14 weekly flights between Tokyo and New York and Houston. With the launch of Nagoya-Honolulu service, the airline will operate 73 weekly flights from Japan, while increasing total capacity by about 13 percent.

“This new daily service between Nagoya and Honolulu will build on our already extensive Asia-Pacific network, which currently boasts the greatest number of flights between Japan and Micronesia,” said Mark Erwin, Continental Micronesia president and chief executive officer.

“We’re very happy that this growth in our business has enabled us to bring these co-workers back to work,” said Continental Micronesia managing director of operations Dan Morgan.

Continental will utilize a Boeing 767-400 for the new route, configured with 35 BusinessFirst and 200 coach seats. Every seat has an individual Interactive Entertainment System offering free video games, music and feature films. The aircraft is equipped with oversized storage bins, adjustable winged headrests and sleeper seats in BusinessFirst, laptop computer power ports at every seats in BusinessFirst and select rows in coach, and eight laboratories.

Continental Airlines is the world’s sixth-largest airline with more than 2,900 daily departures throughout the Americas, Europe and Asia. Continental serves 149 domestic and 119 international destinations—more than any other airline in the world—and nearly 200 additional points are served via codeshare partner airlines. With 42,000 employees the airline has hubs serving New York, Houston, Cleveland and Guam, and carried approximately 51 million passengers per year.

In 2004, Continental earned awards and critical acclaim for both its operation and its corporate culture. Fortune ranks Continental one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For in America, an honor it has earned for six consecutive years, and also ranks Continental as the top airline in its Most Admired Global Companies in 2004. The carrier won major awards at the 2004 OAG Airline of the Year Awards including “Airline of the Year,” “Best Airline Based in North America” and “Best Executive/Business Class.” For more company information, visit continental.com.

Continental Micronesia is headquartered on Guam and operates a Pacific hub from the A.B. Won Pat Guam International Airport. A wholly-owned subsidiary of Continental Airlines, Continental Micronesia offers more than 290 departures each week between 22 cities throughout the Pacific Rim, the Micronesian islands and Hawaii with a fleet of 13 next-generation Boeing 737 narrowbody and 767 widebody aircraft. In addition, Continental Micronesia and its codeshare partner Cape Air operate commuter service between Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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Disaster declaration for NMI

This is the full text of the letter sent by President Bush to Gov. Juan N. Babauta informing him of the declaration of emergency for the CNMI in the wake of Typhoon Tingting, which hit the islands on June 28.

Dear Governor Babauta:

I have declared a major disaster under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C 5121-5206 (the Stafford Act), for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) due to damage resulting from flooding, high surf, high winds, and wind-driven rain associated with Typhoon Tingting on June 27-29, 2004. I have authorized Federal relief and recovery assistance in the affected area.

Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation will be provided. Consistent with the requirement that Federal assistance be supplemental, any

Federal funds provided under the Stafford Act for Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation will be limited to 75 percent of the total eligible costs in the designed areas. However, pursuant to the Insular Areas Act, 48 U.S.C 1469a(d), FEMA may consider a cost share waiver for certain programs if requested and warranted.

The Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), will coordinate Federal assistance efforts and designate specific areas eligible for such assistance. The Federal Coordinating Officer will be Mr. William Lockey of FEMA. He will consult with you and assist in the execution of the FEMA-CNMI Agreement for disaster assistance governing the expenditure of Federal funds.

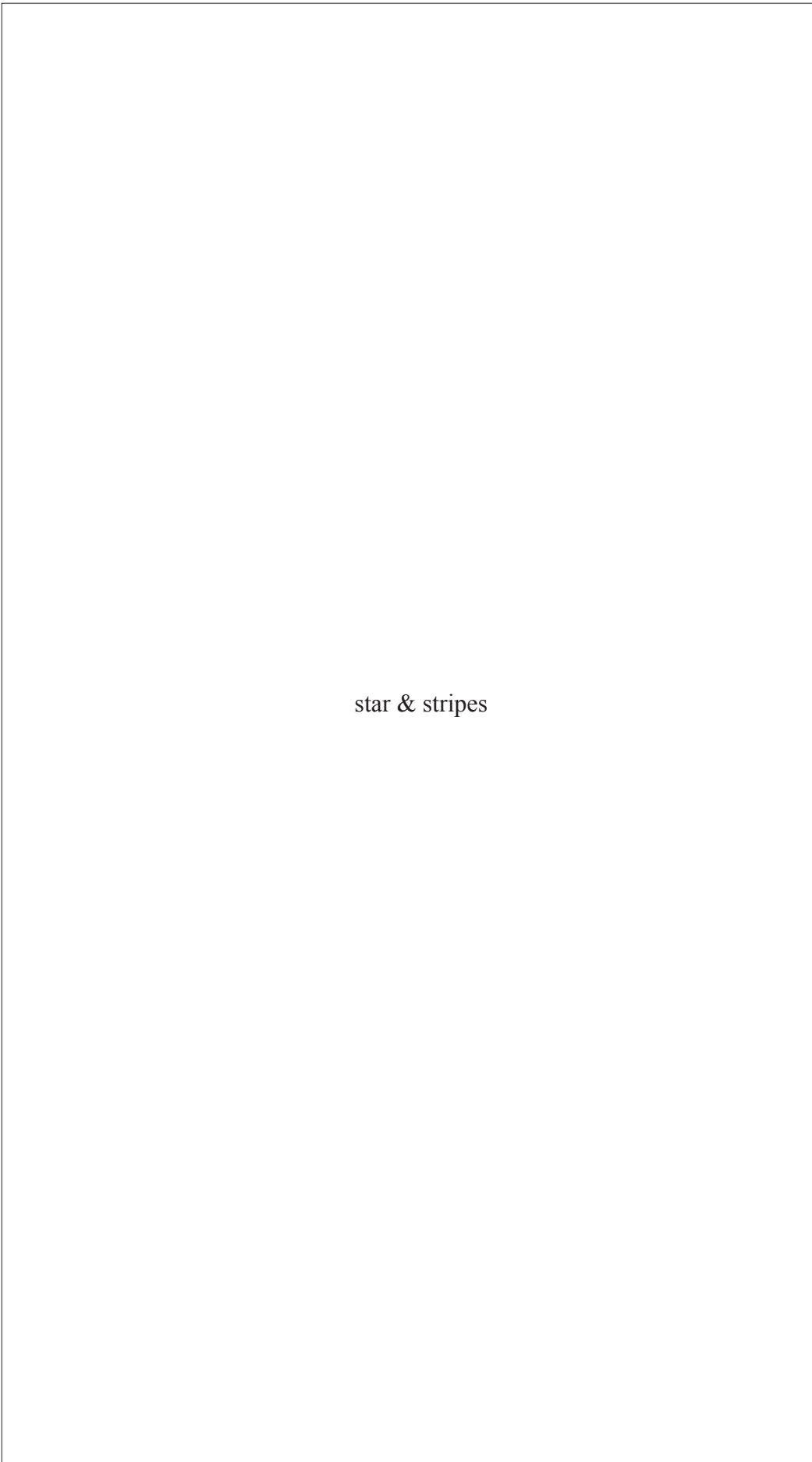
Sincerely,

George W. Bush

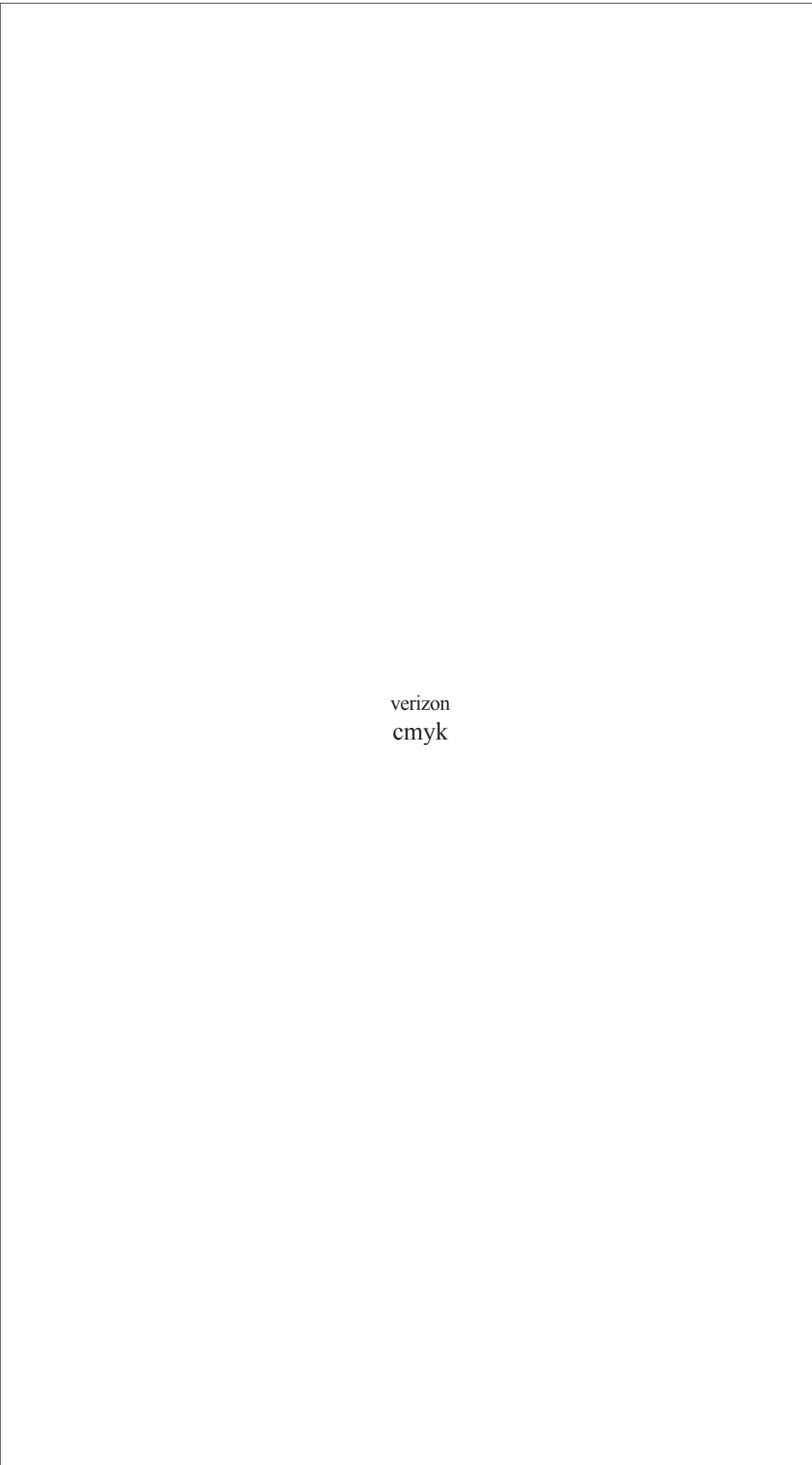
gorman

DIAL RENT

dial rent



star & stripes



verizon
cmyk

Nation

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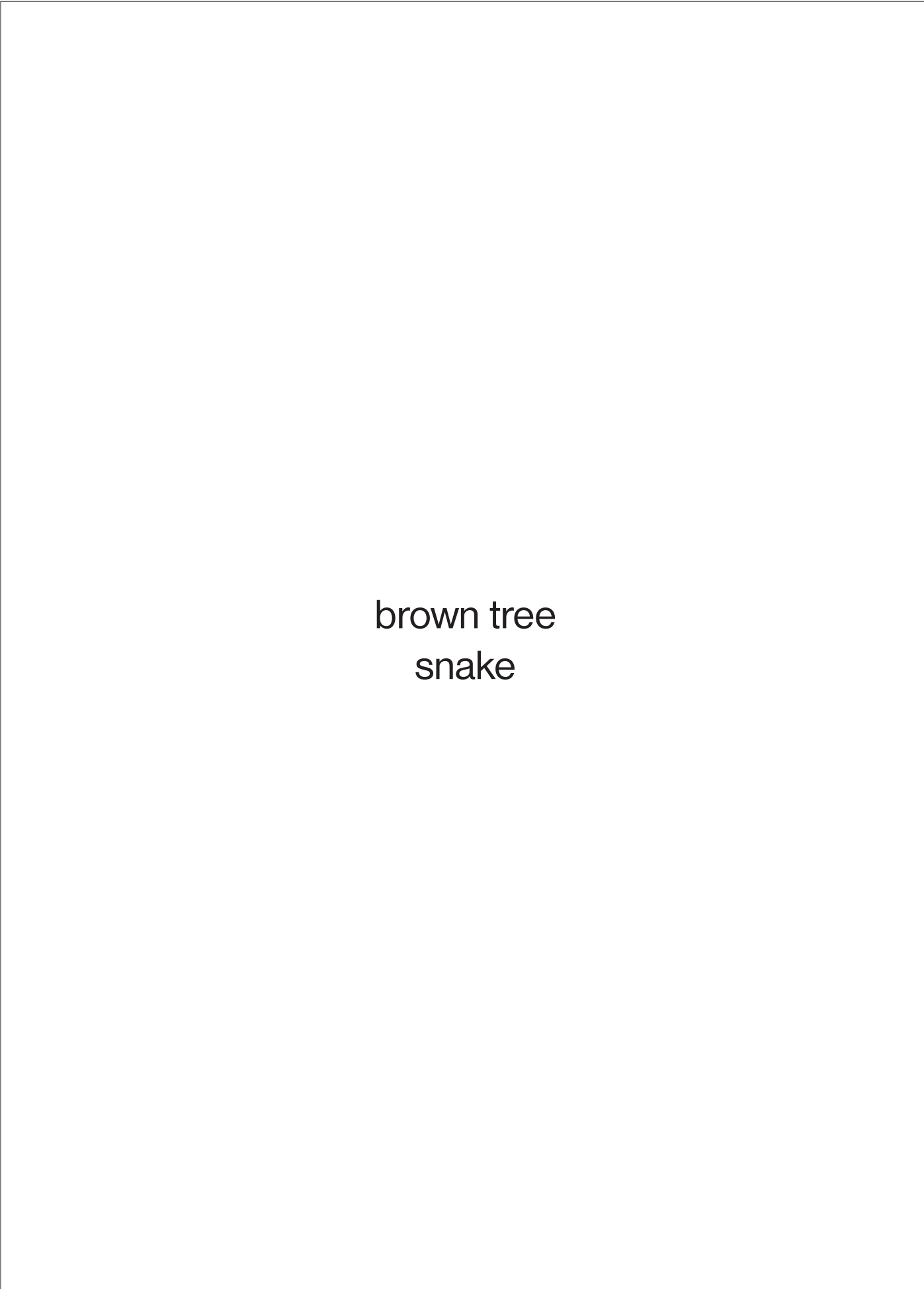
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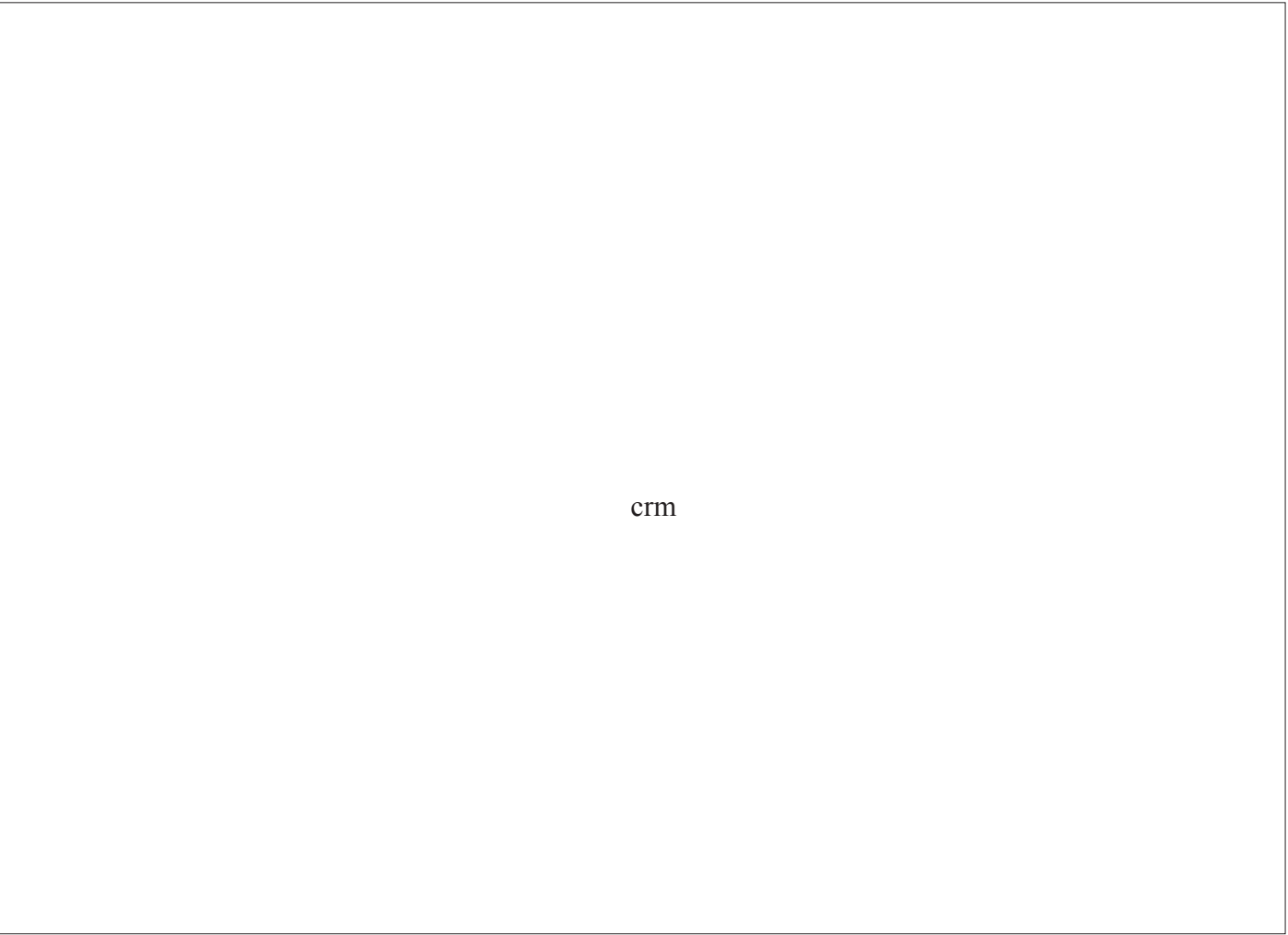
jws

ctsi

Asia



brown tree
snake



CJPA

Asia

Death toll in India flooding hits 1,000



A rickshaw driver wades through a flooded street in Ambala, 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of New Delhi, India, Tuesday, Aug. 3, 2004.

By RUPAK SANYAL
AP WRITER

NEW DELHI (AP)—The death toll from monsoon flooding in India crossed 1,000 Wednesday with reports of more than 165 people killed by rains that destroyed crops, flooded highways and halted trains across South Asia.

The toll across South Asia from six weeks of monsoons reached 1,823, according to official figures compiled by The Associated Press.

Nearly 130 deaths occurred in India’s western Gujarat state over the past three days in remote areas unreachable by

roads or telephone, said state spokesman I.K. Jadeja. They included 17 people killed when heavy rains smashed three homes in Bharuch district.

On Tuesday, mudslides surged into an underground tunnel of the Tehri Dam power project, killing 30 workers and injuring 10 others, said N.S. Napalchyl, the principal disaster management secretary in northern Uttaranchal state, 185 miles north of New Delhi. Twenty-five bodies had been recovered by Wednesday and five remained buried under rubble, he said.

Seventeen more bodies were found Wednesday as floodwaters receded in the eastern Indi-

an state of Bihar, said Upendra Sharma, a top government official in the state capital, Patna.

One person was killed in Vaishali, 16 miles north of Patna, when police fired guns to disperse a riotous mob protesting inadequate relief supplies, said H.N. Deva of the Vaishali police.

In Bangladesh, a boat carrying 10 villagers across a lake in a storm overturned on Wednesday, drowning a 3-year-old girl and a 70-year-old man while eight others swam to safety, said Nurul Afsar, an official in Moulvibazar district.

The storm also swept through several villages, destroying 50 mud and straw houses, he

said. Two other people died of diarrhea in Bangladesh as the disease struck another 8,220 victims in the past 24 hours, the government said.

Diarrhea, dysentery and typhoid are spreading as waters recede, leaving behind sewage and filth and contaminating drinking water. Children are the worst affected.

U.N. agencies were meeting with foreign donors and government officials in the Bangladesh capital, Dhaka, on Wednesday to assess the flood damage and relief and rehabilitation needs in preparation for an aid appeal that the United Nations intends to launch next week.

Man slashes 15 children, kills 1 in China

BEIJING (AP)—A school employee with a history of schizophrenia slashed 15 students and three teachers with a kitchen knife Wednesday at a Beijing kindergarten, killing one child and leaving terrified classmates covered in blood, police and news reports said.

Two children suffered serious injuries in the attack at the school run by the No. 1 Hospital of elite Peking University,

police said. The wounded were taken down the street to the hospital, located in an affluent neighborhood less than a half mile from the compound in central Beijing where China’s leaders work.

The attack in one of the country’s most privileged neighborhoods is a blow to the communist leadership’s effort to promote an image of order in the capital amid rising fears

of crime and violence.

Police said they rushed to the school after getting reports at 9:36 a.m. that a man was attacking children with a vegetable knife.

They arrested Xu Heping, a 51-year-old man who was working part-time as a gatekeeper, police spokesman Liu Wei said.

Xu had been hospitalized for schizophrenia for five months in 1999 at another hospital in Beijing, Liu said. He said Xu

began working at the school two years ago.

Police wouldn’t say how many children were in the school at the time of the attack. Most Chinese students are off for summer vacation.

Citing a reporter at the hospital where the injured were taken, the official Xinhua News Agency said the children were “covered in blood and looked terrified.”

PSS008

PSS020

Terror group is allegedly planning assassinations

By **MICHAEL CASEY**
AP WRITER

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Shifting tactics, an al-Qaida-linked group that staged the deadliest post-Sept. 11 terror bombing is believed to be planning assassinations of Western and regional leaders in Asia, moving away from large-scale strikes against civilian targets, officials told The Associated Press.

Increasingly isolated and on the run, Jemaah Islamiyah’s capabilities have been eroded by dozens of arrests, a shortage of funds and divisions within its leadership.

As a result, the group isn’t focusing on coordinated attacks like the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings that killed 202 people and the 2003 suicide bombing of the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta, which killed 12 people, officials told the AP.

“The threat has been contained but it is still there and has not been eliminated completely,” said Zainal Abidin Zain, director-general of Southeast

Asia’s U.S.-backed anti-terror center in Malaysia.

Jemaah Islamiyah remains the most dangerous terror group in Southeast Asia. But the Marriott bombing was the last large-scale attack attributed to the group. Some security officials suggest the arrests of key members—including Hambali, the group’s alleged operations chief—has stripped it of the ability to strike big anytime soon.

Remnants of Jemaah Islamiyah have tried to regroup in Indonesia so they could launch more strikes, a Malaysian government official said on condition of anonymity. But they were hindered by the absence of a strong leader like Hambali, he said.

“There is no one of Hambali’s caliber to step in and take over,” another Malaysia security official said, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

Jemaah Islamiyah’s alleged leader, Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, is jailed in Indonesia awaiting trial on allegations that he ordered the Marriott attack and other charges. An Afghan-trained

Indonesian who goes by the name Zulkarnaen replaced Hambali as operations chief after his arrest last August, authorities say.

The group still has an estimated 2,000 operatives throughout Southeast Asia thanks to a recruiting drive. But the organization has been infiltrated by informants, doesn’t have enough money and faces a public increasingly intolerant of terrorism, according to Sidney Jones, a terrorism expert who has studied Jemaah Islamiyah.

“All the major bombing operations that we know of involved the transfer of some money from outside,” Jones said. “From interrogation depositions that we’ve gotten hold of, it seems there isn’t enough money to support the organization let alone the families of members who have been detained.”

The Marriott bombing sparked outrage in Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim nation, because 11 of the 12 victims were Indonesian, many poorly paid hotel workers and taxi drivers.

S. Africans said to plan attack on home

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Two South Africans captured along with a senior al-Qaida terrorist were plotting attacks on tourist sites in their home country, Pakistani officials said Wednesday, a surprising target for Islamic terrorism given the African nation’s vocal stand against the war in Iraq and Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.

South African officials cast doubt on reports of a terror plot, though this past spring a top South African police official indicated that authorities foiled plans to attack the country during its April 14 elections.

The two men are believed to have arrived in Pakistan on a flight from the United Arab Emirates just days before their July 25 arrest, which followed a 12-hour gunbattle in the eastern city of Gujrat. They greeted

police with curses and promised an unending battle against President Bush and anyone who supports him, according to a senior police official.

The South African suspects were identified as Feroz Ibrahim, believed to be in his 30s, and Zubair Ismail, in his 20s, said Gujrat Police Chief Raja Munawar Hussain.

Hussain told The Associated Press that authorities found several maps of South African cities among the items seized after the raid, which also netted Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian with a \$25 million bounty on his head for the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

“They had some terror plans for South Africa,” Hussain said. He had no details on the plans or the timing of an attack, but

an intelligence official based in the eastern city of Lahore told The Associated Press that authorities believe the men wanted to target tourist sites in Johannesburg, South Africa’s commercial center.

International fugitives have repeatedly exploited South Africa’s porous borders and al-Qaida militants have obtained South African passports, but this is the first time evidence has emerged of South Africans being recruited into the terror network.

The reports sent shock waves through South Africa, where until recently many considered their country immune from terrorist attacks. South Africa, where some 2 percent of the 45 million population are Muslims, has been outspoken in its opposition to the Iraq war and its condemnation of Israel’s treatment of Palestinians.

Chess legend Fischer faces long detention

TOKYO (AP)—Former world chess champion Bobby Fischer could be detained a long time while fighting a deportation order to the United States, his lawyer said Wednesday.

Masako Suzuki filed a request Wednesday that Fischer, who was detained July 13 at an airport outside Tokyo, be released from custody while appealing the deportation order. However, Suzuki said she was not optimistic about her chances of success.

“Japanese law allows for the authorities to hold people in this situation for 60 days,” she told The Associated Press. “Normally, they stick by that.”

Fischer, who was detained at Narita airport on charges of traveling with a revoked U.S. passport, also has filed for refugee status. A decision on that could take months because the government likely would have to hold a hearing, said John Bosnitch, a Tokyo-based adviser to Fischer.

The American chess legend is wanted by U.S. authorities for playing a 1992 match for \$3 million in the former Yugoslavia in violation of international sanctions.

He was detained while trying to board a flight to the Philippines.

The Justice Ministry rejected Fischer’s application for political asylum Tuesday because two photographs accompanying the documents did not have his name written on the back.

Both applications were accepted by officials Wednesday, Bosnitch said.

If his request for provisional release is denied, Fischer intends to immediately file another one, Bosnitch said.

Earlier, Suzuki said the 61-year-old Fischer has complained of rough treatment, not seeing the sun, not being allowed to exercise and being subjected to secondhand smoke.

cpa

Conjoined twins from RP separated at NY hospital

NEW YORK (AP)—Carl and Clarence Aguirre, the 2-year-old twins from the Philippines who were joined at the top of their heads, have been surgically separated, hospital officials said.

Doctors teased apart abutting portions of the boys' brains at 10:32 p.m. Wednesday (0232 GMT Thursday) after completing an incision around their skull, said Steve Osborne, a spokesman for the Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx.

The boys survived, and doctors, nurses and technicians applauded in the operating room, Osborne said.

The twins' head-to-head operating tables were then pulled apart slightly, said Osborne, who was in the OR.

The separation climaxed a gradual approach that lasted 10 months, a departure from the more common marathon operations that have separated other conjoined twins.

The operation continued after the separation. Doctors planned to reconstruct a membrane that covered the boys' brains and then cover their heads with skin, some of it from tissue expanders that had been planted beneath their scalps.

Doctors have warned that it will be months before the twins' conditions and the success of the separation can be fully assessed. In the past, separation was considered a success if both twins simply survived. But Montefiore's goal for the Aguirre boys, who have never been able to sit up, stand straight or look at each other's face, was "viable, independent lives."

Over four major surgeries since October, the boys' separate-but-touching brains were gently pushed apart and the



Arlene Aguirre gives her conjoined twins, Carl, left, and Clarence a kiss as the sedated two-year-olds are taken into the operating room at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y., Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2004.

tangle of blood vessels they shared were cut and divided. Between surgeries, the boys were given time to heal and to adapt to their rerouted circulation systems. Originally, veins near Clarence's brain were doing much of the circulation work for both boys, but scans showed dormant veins on Carl's side had "plumped up" and begun working in response to the surgery, lead surgeon Dr. James Godrich said last week.

In Wednesday's operation, which began at 10 a.m. (1400 GMT), doctors cut a fourth window into the skull and divided the last major vein the brothers shared, along with other blood vessels. About six hours into that procedure, they decided the boys were doing well enough to continue.

The doctors said last week that excessive bleeding or swelling in the brain would force a postponement.

ASIAN Briefs

Dinosaur fossil reportedly found in Japan

TOKYO (AP)—A Japanese hiker has discovered six bones believed to be from a dinosaur that lived 78 million years ago, a researcher said Tuesday.

The fragments of teeth and bone are thought be from a *Lambeosaurus*, said Haruo Saegusa, a researcher at the Museum of Nature and Human Activities in Sumoto.

Lambeosaurus is a type of *Hadrosaur*, the so-called duck-billed dinosaur, that grew to more than 30 feet long, weighed about 4 tons and lived 78 million years ago.

The fossils were found near Sumoto city on Awaji, a small island off the coast of the western city of Kobe, about 270 miles west of Tokyo, he said.

A 55-year-old construction worker and amateur paleontologist came upon the beak bone, teeth, vertebrae and tail vertebrae of the creature in May while hiking in the woods, Saegusa said.

US Embassy in India to close for day

NEW DELHI (AP)—The U.S. Embassy said it would close the departments typically visited by non-Americans on Thursday, "in light of security concerns."

The Wednesday statement on the closure did not disclose what prompted the action.

"The Embassy will make every effort to continue to provide emergency services to American citizens during this temporary closure," read an e-mail statement to Americans who are registered with the embassy in New Delhi.

The statement said the Consular Section, the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration Office and the library at the American Center across town would be closed to the public.

Gunmen kill two Afghan aid group workers

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Gunmen fired on a car carrying two Afghans from a German relief agency in a former Taliban stronghold, officials said Wednesday, killing them both in another setback to stuttering efforts to bring assistance to long-suffering Afghans.

The U.S. military forecast more attacks on civilians—possibly including a major strike in the capital—as tension and violence continue to mount in the run-up to landmark October elections.

On Wednesday, Afghanistan's powerful defense minister, Mohammed Fahim, backed a rival to President Hamid Karzai in the elections, and insisted he would not use violence to try to hang on to office.

Karzai last week dropped Fahim, a militia leader who also serves as deputy head-of-state, from his ticket for the Oct. 9 presidential vote. The surprise move split Karzai's Cabinet and put NATO troops in Kabul on alert for any reaction from Fahim's troops.

DPW 026

DPW027

cpa

By **GEORGE JAHN**
AP WRITER

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—De-
fying international concerns,
Iran has resumed clandestine
work linked to uranium enrich-
ment, testing equipment and
producing a gas that can be

kfc
+red/blue

Science & Technology

Music industry takes cues from file-sharing

By JON HEALEY
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Having condemned file-sharing for five years, the music industry is now trying to co-opt it.

Online music businesses are adding features once found only in file-sharing networks, such as the ability send free songs to friends and to listen to them on a variety of portable players. And a handful of companies are developing hybrid peer-to-peer networks that encourage sharing but prevent users from violating copyright law.

One example is Mercora Inc. of Santa Clara, Calif., a fast-growing start-up that lets people listen to songs from other users' computers. Mercora's software turns each user's computer into an Internet radio station that any other Mercora user can tune in, enabling them to hear—but not download—a wide array of tracks.

Meanwhile, one of the leading peer-to-peer networks has agreed to transform itself from a hotbed for piracy into a haven for legal



file-sharing. IMesh.com Inc., which struck a truce with the major record companies last week, pledged to revamp its network by the end of the year.

It remains to be seen whether any of these efforts can compete effectively with popular file-sharing networks such as Kazaa and EDonkey, which are used by millions of people around the world.

"You can't displace piracy with legal services by being as good as a pirate service, because pirate services have no restrictions," analyst Josh Bernoff of Forrester Research said. Instead, Bernoff said, legitimate outlets should compete by providing more innovative, reliable and easy-to-use services.

Unlike the songs offered by legitimate outlets, which are wrapped in electronic locks to deter piracy, the music on file-sharing networks can be shared freely and played on any device



without regard to copyright law.

Some legal services are hoping to win over customers by offering the same features—to the extent they can.

MusicMatch Inc. of San Diego, which operates a downloadable music store and an online radio service, is planning a \$10-a-month offering that will let subscribers play as many songs as they wish from the company's online jukebox. They will also be able to make songs available to their friends for free.

There's a catch, of course—non-subscribing friends can only play each track three times. If they want to hear a song again, they'll be invited to subscribe to the monthly service.

For Mercora, sharing songs is fundamental to the business.

Like Kazaa and EDonkey, the start-up relies on users to provide the free songs that are the lifeblood of its network. As more users sign on, more songs become available, attracting more music fans.

To keep everyone on the right side of the law, Mercora doesn't let users copy songs from each other. Instead, they merely listen to tracks from other users' collections. The tracks are chosen by Mercora's software, which tailors playlists to meet restrictions that Congress imposed on Internet radio stations. That way, the service qualifies automatically for a broadcasting license.

"Our whole premise was based on the fact that the reason people went to peer-to-peer networks was the unlimited discovery of music," said founder Srivats Sampath, who previously served as chief executive of computer security software maker McAfee.com.

The 2-month-old Mercora service is free today, but the company may decide to charge its most active users a small monthly fee to cover the royalties it pays to labels, artists and music publishers. Sampath said the company also planned to generate fees by selling advertisements and running an online marketplace for Mercora members to buy and sell music-related goods.

Bridgemark Services Ltd., which owns IMesh, could bring the music industry even closer to embracing peer-to-peer technology. But it has yet to reveal how its users will find and share songs legally, and the major record companies have not said how they will support the new service.

The most likely approach for IMesh, according to music-industry executives, is to use technology that manages what users share and download to prevent them from copying songs without permission. That sort of technology is being pitched by several companies, including Audible Magic Corp. of Los Gatos, Calif., Kokopelli Networks Inc. of Ottawa and Snocap Inc. of San Francisco, which was launched by former Napster creator Shawn Fanning.

Of course, clamping down on what users can share would rob IMesh of one of the most compelling features of today's file-sharing networks: the virtually unlimited selection of songs, including bootlegged and homemade versions of songs that were never officially released.

Nevertheless, Audible Magic Chief Executive Vance Ikezoye said he was encouraged by the labels' and IMesh's stated wish to blaze a trail to new business models.

"The industry, I think, has gotten some criticism for not supporting digital media and new models," he said, "and I think this is a positive direction."



ctsi

When finished, turn off your computer

By **BRIAN BERGSTEIN**
AP Technology Writer

Q I've heard that frequently turning my computer on and off can hurt the performance of internal parts. But I don't want to leave it on all the time either and waste power. What's the best course?

A While it once might have been true that computer hard drives or power-supply systems could be degraded over time by turning the machines on and off, there's little reason now not to go the green (and money-saving) route: Shut things completely down if you're not going to be using your PC for many hours.

Recent tests at Canada's University of Waterloo found that computers with Pentium 4 processors running at 1.7 gigahertz drew 110 watts of electricity while booting up and 60 watts when they were on but idle. A 17-inch cathode-ray tube (CRT) monitor added an additional 75 watts. Newer, flat-screen LCD monitors use about half as much juice as CRTs.

In a sense, then, the PC isn't a big juice hog. A microwave oven devours electricity at a rate of 750 to 1,100 watts, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

PCs in power-saving standby or sleep mode have even less of a presence. In the Waterloo tests, they were draining 35 watts. That's roughly equivalent to three clock radios.

But add up hours of standby time, and multiply that by the millions of computers in the world, and it is some serious electricity.

In fact, microchip maker Infineon Technologies AG, which is working on making electronics' sleep modes more energy-efficient, estimates that a mere 1 percent decrease in standby power consumption would save the nation 360 megawatts—the equivalent of a medium-sized power plant. Put another way, 10 percent of an average home's electricity consumption comes from machines of some kind sitting on standby, said Infineon spokesman Saswato Das.

Dell Inc., the world's leading seller of PCs, has no official position on whether its customers should leave the machines running or not. Leaving computers on all the time doesn't erode their performance, but it doesn't appear that turning them off and on does either, because the reliability of key parts has improved significantly, spokesman Lionel Menchaca said.

"There used to be a bigger difference in terms of wear and tear when you power up your PC, but it's not as much of an issue now," Menchaca said.

After the tests at Waterloo, Manfred Grisebach of the university's information systems and technology group pointed out that hard drives that never get shut down seem to live a long time. But, he said, so do drives that get shut off all the time.

"What we can't say is which last longer," he said.

Law enforcement tackling computer crime

RICHMOND, Va. (AP)—Federal and state law enforcement agencies are joining forces to combat computer crimes, officials announced.

The Cyber-Crime Strike Force will have a staff of seven investigators: four from the FBI, two from the state Attorney General Jerry Kilgore's office and one from the Virginia State Police. They will work out of the Richmond FBI office, which has a computer lab from which online undercover investigations may be conducted.

Three attorneys from Kilgore's office and one from the office of U.S. Attorney Paul J. McNulty will prosecute the cases in state and federal courts.

The strike force also will work closely with the Bedford County Sheriff's Office, which formed its own "Blue Ridge Thunder" task force to track down online pedophiles in 1998.

McNulty said at a news conference Thursday that the partnership will help agencies share intelligence and bring computer criminals to justice more quickly.

Government gives nod to new TiVo feature

By **JENNIFER C. KERR**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Federal regulators on Wednesday approved technology allowing TiVo subscribers to send copies of recorded shows over the Internet, something Hollywood and major league sports leagues oppose.

In its decision, the Federal Communications Commission said the new TiVo feature has enough protections in place to prevent mass distribution of copyrighted material.

The technology would allow a TiVo subscriber to download broadcasts to a computer and send copies of recorded shows over the Internet to an office or home or to a small circle of friends, as long as they are on the

subscriber's registered account.

The Motion Picture Association of America, the National Football League and others complained that the new service would allow the 1.6 million TiVo subscribers to redistribute shows over the Internet to virtually anyone, anywhere.

The NFL is especially worried about the potential for users to beam football games to viewers in blacked-out areas where the games aren't broadcast. The NFL does not allow local broadcasts unless the home team sells out.

The league signaled it may sue over the decision.

"We'll confer with the other concerned parties and take whatever steps are appropriate to protect our interests," NFL

spokesman Seth Palansky said.

TiVo's machines let viewers record programs onto a large-capacity hard drive rather than a videocassette, giving viewers many more options. For example, they can watch an earlier part of a show, game or movie while recording later segments.

The technology that TiVo asked the FCC to consider recognizes the so-called "broadcast flag," which the agency approved in late 2003. The flag is an electronic signal that tells digital video recorders to encrypt shows when recording. The encryption prevents widespread distribution over the Internet.

TiVo officials said that means movies and sports broadcasts can't be sent to mass audiences.

"TiVo has always tried to maintain an appropriate balance between consumer interests and the rights of content providers," said Mike Ramsay, CEO of the Alviso, Calif.-based company.

The new technology, which TiVo refers to as "remote access," could be included in a service called TiVoToGo that the company plans to offer this fall. That will let a user transfer recorded shows to a laptop, so the subscriber can take the shows on the road. But the TiVoToGo service currently does not allow for Internet sharing, the company said.

Also Wednesday, the FCC approved a number of other proposed technologies from Microsoft, Sony and others that all aim to prevent piracy by recognizing the broadcast flag.

mazda mvp
cmyk

Life & Style

Anderson becomes novelist with ghostwriter

By DERRIK J. LANG
AP WRITER

Pamela Anderson has a new best friend: her ghostwriter. The 37-year-old model-actress added novelist to her resume Tuesday with the release of "Star," published by Atria Books. But the former "Baywatch" babe didn't do it alone.

"The first meeting we knew it was magic," Anderson told The Associated Press about her not-so-invisible ghostwriter Eric Shaw Quinn.

Anderson and Quinn were

introduced by Anderson's publisher after she decided not to write an autobiography, opting for a fictionalized version of her life filled with not-so-subtle coincidences.

A few examples: Anderson's textual counterpart Star Wood Leigh is discovered on the jumbotron at a Miami Dolphins game. Anderson was discovered on the jumbotron at a British Columbia Lions game. Star posed for Mann magazine. Anderson took it off for Playboy. Star slept with rockers and Hollywood-types. Anderson did that, too.

Quinn sat side-by-side Monday with Anderson at a book signing at the Barnes and Noble store in Rockefeller Center. Anderson twirled for dozens of photographers and signed books for hundreds of fans. Quinn seemed just happy to be there.

"This is my ghostwriter," Anderson yelled to the photographers. "Don't tell anybody!"

Anderson, who writes a column for Jane magazine, took seven months to create "Star." The busty mother of two sons, Brandon and Dylan, from her marriage to rocker Tommy Lee,

wrote the novel on a yellow legal pad while Quinn put everything together on a computer.

"We just had fun," Anderson said. "It was so natural. There wasn't one disagreement. Nothing. Now we're just two peas in a pod. Or two nuts in a shell."

How did the duo tackle the book's steamy sex scenes, based on Anderson's real-life flings with celebrities such as Scott Baio, Bret Michaels and Kid Rock?

"Eric would say, 'OK Pamela, write some sex,'" Anderson said. "Then, he'd look at what I wrote and we tried to keep it se-

rious. But then we just laughed. He's not shy or modest."

Neither is Anderson. She appears on the novel's cover nude, with her "Star" logo covering her physical assets.

"I'm naked, covered in pink and stars ... looking like I'm out of my mind," she said.

Anderson and Quinn have already begun work on the sequel.

"What are we calling it?" she asked Quinn, who sat by her side in the back of limo en route to another a book signing.

"Star Struck," Anderson squealed.



Anderson

'Last Comic' host Jay Mohr talks 'SNL'

By LYNN ELBER
AP TELEVISION WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Looking ahead and looking back, Jay Mohr is satisfied with both perspectives.

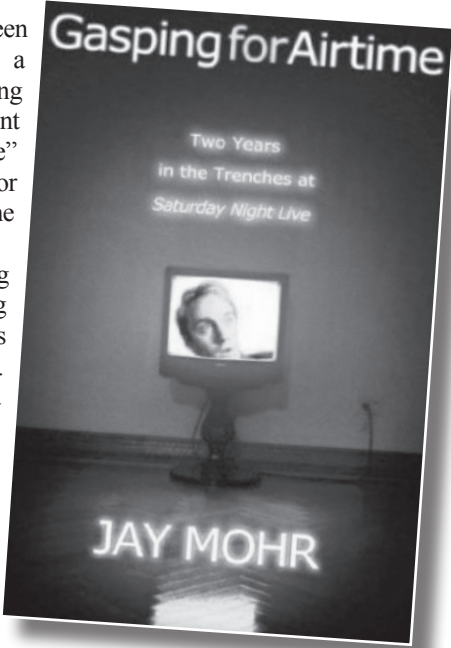
"Last Comic Standing," the NBC talent contest he hosts and executive produces, gives comedians an "American Idol"-style shot at stardom—or at least steady nightclub work.

"Gasping for Airtime," Mohr's book about his two years as a writer and performer on "Saturday Night Live," candidly details what it's like to be a blip on a pop-culture phenomenon, panic attacks and all.

His new show has been instant gratification, a chance to help struggling comedians. The pungent "Saturday Night Live" experience had to age for nearly a decade before he could appreciate it.

"It was fascinating and I wasn't enjoying it, even when it was going well," Mohr said. "I watched Nirvana perform, I talked to Kurt Cobain, I talked to (Eric) Clapton, I got to work with (Chris) Farley every day.

"But I was so self-obsessed with survival—survival on the show and then mental health survival and back to survival on the show—I certainly didn't take time to smell the roses," he told The Associated Press.



The stellar guest musicians and colleagues including Farley, Mike Myers and Michael McKean were the roses; the thorns were his inability to make his talents fit a demanding monolith and insecurities that fed a panic disorder.

(A few guests inflicted minor scratches: Mohr recalls a skit he'd written for Marisa Tomei being dumped after the actress realized he was merely a featured performer and not a cast member, while Roseanne Barr disrupted a cast meeting by deliberately and loudly belching.)

Mohr, a 23-year-old standup hired as sketch writer and player, found sparkling ideas elusive. He was also confounded by a production style that, as he describes it in "Gasping for Air" (Hyperion), was haphazard and arbitrary.

"Saturday Night Live," a perpetual motion machine that turned out stars like John Belushi and Adam Sandler and serves as a cultural touchstone even when it's subpar, was impervious to a confused comic.

"That's what made it so frustrating, is realizing that whether you bang your head on the wall and scream like hell (to protect a skit) or whether you don't even show up, the show just sort of rolls effortlessly," Mohr said. "Then you really get into this existential conversation with yourself, questioning your own worth and existence."

mell
cmyk

Bands gather to stump against Bush

NEW YORK (AP)—A collection of more than 20 prominent musicians from John Fogerty to Bruce Springsteen to Pearl Jam joined forces Wednesday calling for President Bush's ouster, announcing an unprecedented series of fund-raising concerts across nine swing states.

"I feel this is one of the most critical elections in my lifetime," Springsteen told The Associated Press in the most overtly political statement of his career. "This wasn't one that a concerned citizen felt comfortable sitting out."

Springsteen was joined by

a collection of performers that spanned generations and genres: country act the Dixie Chicks, hip-hoppers Jurassic 5, bluesman Keb' Mo' and classic rockers John Mellencamp and Jackson Browne. The artists, touring under the "Vote for Change" banner, will play 34 shows in 28 cities between Oct. 1-8.

Springsteen's concerns and commitment were shared by other performers, including Dave Matthews and his band.

"It's the first time Bruce and the E Street Band ever stood up and made a clear political statement," Matthews told The

AP. "This is the first time we've ever stood as a band, unified, and said we want a change."

The shows, which launch Oct. 1 in Pennsylvania, will take an unusual approach: as many as six concerts on a single day in cities across the states expected to decide the November presidential race. Other stops on the tour are North Carolina, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin and the key state in 2000, Florida.

The money generated will go to America Coming Together, which promises on its Web site to "derail the right-wing

Republican agenda by defeating George W. Bush." The anticipated millions of dollars will be spent in the swing states before the presidential election, said ACT president Ellen Malcolm.

The shows will be presented by MoveOn Pac, the electoral arm of the liberal interest group MoveOn.org.

There was no immediate word on prices for tickets, which go on sale Aug. 21 for all the shows. The concerts will pair artists, such as Springsteen and REM, the Dixie Chicks and James Taylor, or Mellencamp and Kenny "Babyface" Edmonds.

Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks, who memorably told a London audience last year that she was ashamed to share her home state of Texas with Bush, echoed Springsteen's comment about the importance of the Nov. 2 election.

"A change is in order," Maines said in an AP interview. "There's never been a political climate like this, which is so the polar opposite of me as a person and what I believe in."

The idea was hatched by several of the acts' managers, and quickly expanded. "Once we started talking to each other,

ideas started percolating and other artists started reaching out to us," said Jon Landau, Springsteen's manager.

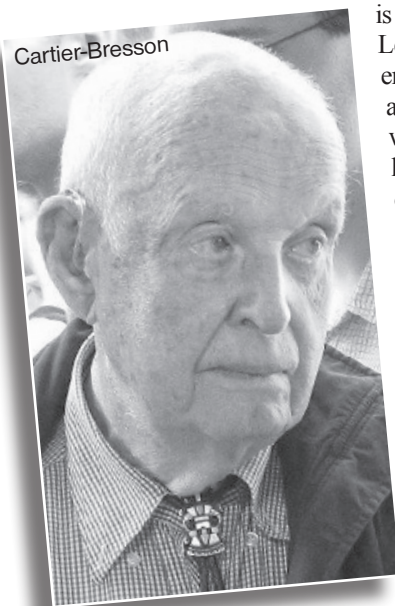
Many of the acts had a history of social activism, from Browne's anti-nuclear concerts to Mellencamp's Farm Aid shows. Pearl Jam front man Eddie Vedder was a Ralph Nader backer in 2000, but he feels Democratic nominee John Kerry is the choice this time around.

"There's a vote coming up, and a chance to have a regime change at home," Vedder told AP. "I'm feeling the same way, there's a need for change."

Photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson dies

By **JOCELYN GECKER**
AP WRITER

PARIS (AP)—Henri Cartier-Bresson, the Frenchman whose early dabbings with a Brownie box camera blossomed into celebrated lifetime of traveling the world to capture the hu-



man drama on film, has died at age 95.

From Mahatma Gandhi's funeral to portraits of William Faulkner or Chinese revolutionaries, Cartier-Bresson was a pioneer in photojournalism whose pictures defined the mid-20th century and inspired generations of photographers. Yet he was famously averse to having his own picture taken and in later years turned away from photography to the love of his youth, painting.

A statement from his family and Magnum, the photo agency that Cartier-Bresson co-founded, said he died Tuesday morning at his home in the southwestern Luberon region, and funeral services were held privately Wednesday in the nearby Alpes-de-Haute-Provence region. A memorial service is planned for early September, it said.

"The world of photojournalism has lost its soul," Goksin Sipahioglu, the founder of Sipa photo agency, told France-Info radio.

Gary Knight, managing director of VII, another photo agency, said Cartier-Bresson "defined photography at that crucial pe-

riod when small cameras were coming into fashion and its entire nature was changing."

Cartier-Bresson disdained artificial settings and said photographers should shoot accurately and quickly, seeking "the decisive moment" when the ultimate significance of a given situation is laid bare. He shot with a Leica, the quietest of cameras, working only with black and white film, and notably, without a flash. Limeright, he said, was a sure way to destroy a subject.

To make the camera as unobtrusive as the human eye, he went so far as to tape over its silvery parts in black and would keep it hidden under a handkerchief until the critical moment. The aim was always to capture something of his subject's inner essence—to pinpoint "a relationship between the eye and the heart."

"With the one eye that is closed, one looks within, with the other eye that is open, one looks without," he once said in a rare interview.

Most of his international fame was generated from publication in leading magazines like Life, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar, and prestigious exhibitions, notably a 1947 one-man exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

He was also fascinated by cinema, assisting French director Jean Renoir on the classic "The Rules of the Game" and making two notable documentaries of his own—one about medical aid to the loyalists in the Spanish Civil War and another about French prisoners of war returning home at the end of World War II.

Cartier-Bresson was born Aug. 22, 1908, in Chanteloup outside Paris to a wealthy textile family.

The eldest of three children, he was interested mainly in painting. At 20, he turned his back on the lucrative family business to study art.

In 1930, with a box camera, he started dabbling in photog-

raphy. Two years later, armed with his Leica, he traveled around Europe and West Africa, published photos in magazines and had his first exhibition in Madrid in 1933.

Critics said his most brilliant photograph was "Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare," of a man leaping over a puddle and frozen in mid-air, his V-shaped shadow contrasting with the fence above the railroad tracks.

"Rue Mouffetard," a poignant shot of a grinning youngster carrying two bottles of wine down the Left Bank market street, became one of Cartier-Bresson's most sought-after photos.

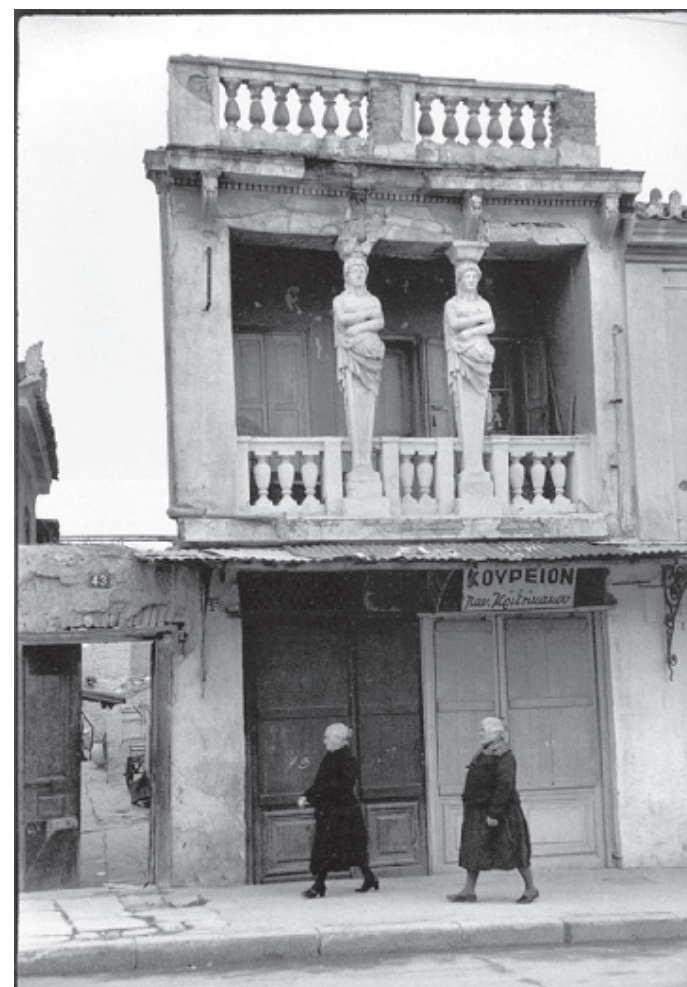
At the outbreak of World War II, he was a corporal in a film and photo unit and was quickly taken prisoner. After nearly three years he escaped and made his way back to Paris where he divided his time between commercial photography and transporting ex-prisoners for the French underground.

His pictures emerged as a stunning reportage of the underground resistance and the political drama of postwar Europe. In 1945, under the aegis of the U.S. Office of War Information, Cartier-Bresson directed "The Return," a highly praised documentary on homecoming French POWs.

In 1947, he joined two of the other pre-eminent photographers of the time, Robert Capa and David Seymour, in founding Magnum, a ground-breaking photo agency.

He continued to photograph, but turned away from the camera in the last 25 years of his life to rediscover painting. By 1988, he was spending most days sketching in pencil or charcoal at his Paris home or at his retreat in southern France.

In 1937, Cartier-Bresson married a Javanese dancer, Ratna Mohini. He is survived by Martine Franck, whom he married in 1970, and their daughter, Melanie.



One of Cartier-Bresson's work called *Atena*, taken in 1953.

sis

sis

Rapper Kanye West knows he's good

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
AP MUSIC WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Kanye West's debut album, "The College Dropout," is a masterful piece of work that should be mentioned among the classic albums of our time. That's what West thinks. And he'll tell you so—again and again and again.

"You can't judge 'The College Dropout.' It's something completely different," the 27-year-old musician declared in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "It's definitely a classic, if I stepped aside from myself and say that. ... we'll see the results in the next six months, of whether it did change the game or whether it is its own entity."

humorous smash "Slow Jamz," featuring West and actor Jamie Foxx.

Even a life-threatening car accident in 2002 didn't defer his dreams—he turned the experience into a hit single, recording a song about the crash and rapping with his jaw wired shut on the clever "Through the Wire." The chorus featured West's much-imitated trademark sound, a sped-up sample of a soul classic, in this case Chaka Khan's "Through the Fire."

"My thing is, how can I possibly overly confident? Look at my accomplishments!" says West, in between breaks sketching out designs for his newest project—launching his own sneaker.

Yet in his next breath, the Chicago native (and true college dropout, from Chicago State) admits that much of his exuberance is just an act—a mental trick to give him the confidence he needs to succeed in the rough-and-tumble music world.

"I say in my songs, I'm so insecure. So a lot of times, arrogance is to combat insecurity. So in order for me to go out and do what I've done, facing insecurity and facing people telling me I couldn't do it, I had to build a force field around myself," he explains.

"I had to be a borderline lunatic to think that I could do what I've done. It's crazy ... what I've accomplished is crazy," he says.

West's rise to the top may not be crazy, but it certainly is the stuff rap fairy tales are made of. Drawn to rap since childhood, he set his sights on being the next superstar. But instead of just dreaming about it, he took action. He got his mother, a college professor, to lend him money to buy an expensive keyboard when he was a teen so he could work on his tunes, and started hanging out in clubs to taste the scene, though he was too young to get in.

"I thought I was going to get signed back when I was 13 years old, and come out with a record and take Kris Kross out," he said of the '90s kiddie rap group.

Kanye actually got an opportunity for stardom a few years ago—West recalls Columbia Records dangling a record contract, and it helped contribute to his decision to drop out of school. But he didn't have the big game to back up his big talk back then—and it may have cost him a deal.

"I said, I'm going to be bigger than Michael Jackson, I'm going to be bigger to Jermaine Dupri. I said that to (Columbia executive) Michael Mauldin"—not knowing that he was Dupri's father.

Whether that torpedoed the deal or not, by the time the meeting was over, "they hit me with those three words—we'll call you. They sent limos on the way up, and when I got downstairs I couldn't even catch a cab."



He didn't give up on his dreams, instead using producing to get his foot in the door. And he kicked it wide open when he provided Jay-Z with the beat to his smash "Izzo (H.O.V.A.)." The hit not only made West's stock soar as a producer, it eventually led to a deal that made him the latest member of Jay-Z's Roc-a-fella label.

"That was the turning point in my life. Jay made all the difference," West says. "I can't say that I wouldn't have done it without him, but he made it easier because he gave me a stamp, he gave me the streets. The Roc-A-fella chain helped me get my name."

One of the reason West has some of the hottest records is because he's offered something different. He introduced the rap world to sped-up samples, yet he's also been diverse enough to offer buttery-smooth soul for the likes of Janet Jackson and anthem-like raps for Dilated Peoples and a party jam for Ludacris.

"I feel like Kanye, he thinks outside of the box as a producer and as an artist," said Usher, in explaining why he chose West for the coveted spot as his opening act on his tour.

But it's been the artist in West that has taken him from behind the scenes to the forefront. Far from the average rapper, West's originality in comparison to his peers is striking. His videos—"Jesus Walks" has three different versions alone—actually have plots and are visually captivating without resorting to a bevy of dancing girls in bikinis. Instead of the thug look, he admits he looks more like "Carlton"—the preppy rich kid from the Will Smith sitcom "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air." And in his music, rather than boasting about his riches, he admits he buys expensive jewelry just to feel validated.

"Every rapper was the king of ... 'I can do this and not go to jail, you know what I'm saying?' Mine just came out from a totally different perspective," he says.

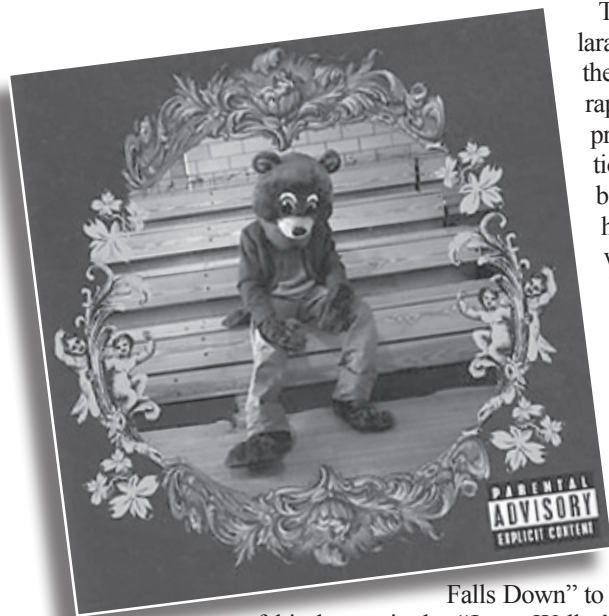
"And I'm very creative. I always want to do something different from what everybody else is doing, ever since I was little."

Ah, that healthy dose of self-confidence appears once again. But West doesn't care whether you think he's cocky or crazy—just as long as you know "The College Dropout" is a classic.

"I tried really hard, and I know I gave my all on this album," he explains, showing a bit of the vulnerability he spoke of earlier when he talks about the rare non-glowing review.

"I know I can't make a song in five minutes like Jay, so what I'm gonna do, I'm going to take five days, but I'm going to try and make it somewhere near as good. That's what I did with my album, and I just wanted credit for that. And it hurt. Those reviews that I got hurt."

Besides, he asks: "Would you classify this album as a B, given what you heard?"



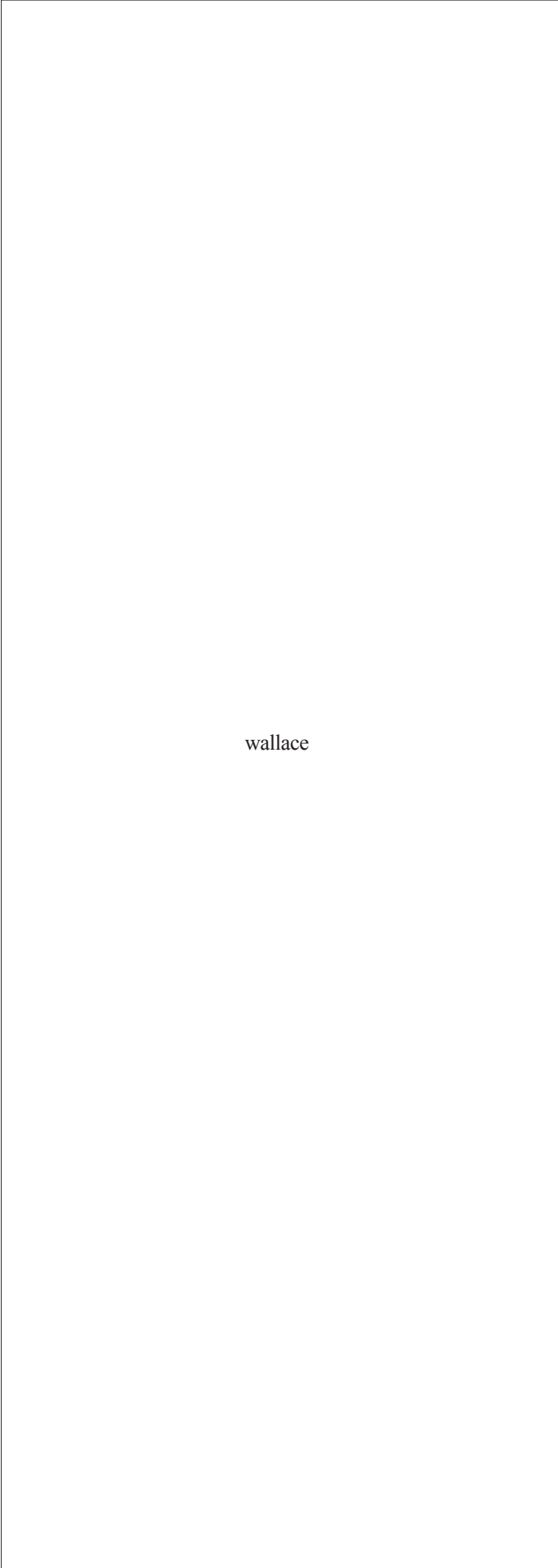
Falls Down" to the religious fervor of his latest single, "Jesus Walks," to the witty skits and clever rhymes, the album takes a welcome detour from materialistic, violent hip-hop fare to subject matter that's more substantial—and more realistic.

"I appreciate people like Kanye, people that dare to be different. Hip-hop is supposed to be an avenue of expression, and people are supposed to be able to express what they feel, what they believe," said the recently unretired rapper Ma\$E, who dropped a verse on the "Jesus Walks" remix.

But it's not only Kanye's rap career that's gotten people's attention. He's become one of today's most prolific producers, working with everyone from Ludacris to Brandy to Alicia Keys.

"He definitely put his foot in the game with his style of music. He's the beat man," said Twista, who had his first No. 1 hit this year thanks to West with the

crm



wallace

Wanting to be wanted is wrong reason for romance

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend of more than a year and I broke up about a month ago. While the split was sudden, I understood his reasons for wanting to end the relationship, and we're still good friends.

Recently, a guy at work expressed an interest in me, and we have made out a few times. This guy is extremely forward, likes to move quickly, and has made it clear that his interest is only physical. I can't seem to find the willpower to tell him to leave me alone. I keep associating with him to fill the void that was left when my boyfriend and I parted ways. He is pushing more and more to see me alone, and I'm running out of excuses.

I know what I'm doing isn't right, but the feeling of being desired is something I don't want to lose again. Can you please help me sort out this mess?



Dear Abby

TORN IN TWO

DEAR TORN: That little voice that's telling you what you're doing isn't right is your intuition. It is trying to steer you in the right direction. When an affair at the office ends, it can be painful and embarrassing to be confronted every day with the ghost of romance past, so take my advice and don't do it.

Tell the office Romeo to slow down—he's moving too fast. If he has any respect for you, he will back off.

□ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: I love to bake, and I have heard for years that when baking or cooking with wine or liquor, the alcohol burns off.

I have a cupcake recipe that contains one-half cup of coffee liqueur and yields 30 cupcakes. They were baked at 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

One of my co-workers, after having one cupcake, told everyone that she was sure the cupcake had made her drunk. She even had slurred speech! She did not appear to be joking, and continued talking about it for several days afterward.

Is this possible?

THE NEW OFFICE BARTENDER,
QUINCY, CALIF.

DEAR BARTENDER: Yes, it is. I posed your question to Sherry Yard, pastry chef at Spago in Beverly Hills. Sherry told me that when the liqueur is put directly into the batter, not all of it burns off—which means people with a sensitivity to alcohol should not eat those cupcakes.

□ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I adopted two daughters from China. They are now 3 and 4 years old. Time and again, people ask if the girls are "real sisters."

My daughters are proud to be Chinese, and they know each other only as sisters. In time, they will understand the circumstances surrounding their birth. An adopted child from China has no means of finding any history about his/her birth parents.

What do you recommend answering when we're asked if the girls are "real sisters"?

LUCKY MOM IN MICHIGAN

DEAR LUCKY MOM: There seems to be no limit to the questions people feel entitled to ask when they see families who are multiracial. Your daughters became "real sisters" the minute you adopted them, and I see no reason why you should tell anyone otherwise.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Thousands audition, few move on in 'Idol'

By ERICA RYAN
AP WRITER

CLEVELAND (AP)—James Pequignot battled heat and humidity, camped out all night at a football stadium and waited hours in line just to be told he wasn't good enough for "American Idol." But the 19-year-old from Cleveland isn't bitter. Pequignot was cut Wednesday in auditions for the television show that produces instant music stars.

The aspiring singer, songwriter and actor said trying out was good experience, and he plans to watch the fourth season of "American Idol" that begins in January.

"I'm really interested to see exactly what they were looking for," he said.

Pequignot was one of thousands of would-be "Idols" who spent all day and night Tuesday at Cleveland Browns Stadium for a chance to audition Wednesday for the popular Fox television show.

Cleveland was the first city in the country to host auditions for the new season. The show also plans to have auditions in Orlando, Fla.; St. Louis; Washington; New Orleans; Anchorage, Alaska; San Francisco, and Las Vegas.



James Pequignot, 19, sings and plays guitar outside the Cleveland Browns Stadium Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2004 in Cleveland.

Executive producer Nigel Lythgoe said the Cleveland crowd of an estimated 15,000 was the biggest he's seen in the show's four years. By comparison, between 12,000 and 13,000 people auditioned last year in New York.

Lauren Lynn, 17, of Brooklyn, Mich., auditioned early Wednesday morning. Despite

going more than 24 hours without sleep, Lynn won a callback to audition again for the show.

"Adrenaline definitely takes over," she said of her performance.

"There's no hard-and-fast 'what we're looking for,'" executive producer Ken Warwick said. But generally, in auditions producers are looking for "a

genuine talent we think will be around in 10 years."

Lythgoe said the talent in Cleveland was mixed. He estimated about 750 performers would move on to the second round of auditions.

Some voices were so bad, he said, they qualified as "weapons of mass destruction."

"We've found them!" he joked.

Pink leaves Prague after casino blast

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP)—American pop star Pink scrapped plans to linger in Prague for a few days after a weekend concert, apparently because of security fears after a bomb exploded at a downtown casino, a concert organizer said Tuesday.

Pink had planned to spend a couple of days in the Czech capital before heading to Denmark, but changed her mind after the blast on Sunday after-

noon, concert promoter Lukas Vedral said.

The bombing took place a few hours before her concert, which drew 5,500 fans, he said.

The bomb, which went off beneath a car parked in front of Prague's Casino Royal, injured 18 people, mostly foreign tourists. Two victims, including a U.S. citizen, remained hospitalized Tuesday.

"She heard Prague was a beau-

tiful town and planned to stay for two days here," Vedral said. "But after the blast, she decided to leave after the concert."

Pink was staying at a hotel near the site of the explosion, which added to her discomfort, he said.

Authorities say the attack apparently was aimed at the owner of the casino, Assaf Abutbul, an Israeli national. Police have not yet arrested the bomber.

Beenie Man apologizes for lyrics

LONDON (AP)—Jamaican dancehall star Beenie Man has apologized for offending people with his lyrics, which critics say incite violence against homosexuals.

In a statement issued through his record company, Virgin, the 30-year-old performer said he had realized "that certain lyrics and recordings I have made in the past may have caused distress and outrage among people whose identities and lifestyles

are different from my own."

"While my lyrics are very personal, I do not write them with the intent of purposefully hurting or maligning others, and I offer my sincerest apologies to those who might have been offended, threatened or hurt by my songs," said the statement, issued Tuesday.

"As a human being, I renounce violence towards other human beings in every way, and pledge henceforth to uphold

these values as I move forward in my career as an artist."

Beenie Man, whose real name is Anthony Davis, is one of the biggest names in the dancehall scene. But human rights campaigners say tracks such as "Bad Man Chi Chi Man (Bad Man, Queer Man)" could incite violence against gay men.

The performer had previously defended his lyrics, saying they reflect life the way Caribbean people see it.

Falco healthy after breast cancer bout

NEWYORK (AP)—"Sopranos" star Edie Falco was diagnosed last year with breast cancer, but has completed her treatment and is healthy, a representative for the 41-year-old actress told The Associated Press.

Falco worked on the HBO show during her treatment, but her representative wouldn't comment Wednesday on whether she underwent che-

motherapy or surgery.

She will soon begin rehearsals for Marsha Norman's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "night, Mother," also starring Brenda Blethyn, which will open on Broadway in November.

Falco has won three Emmy Awards for her role as mob wife Carmela Soprano on "The Sopranos," and has been nominated for a fourth Emmy this year.



Falco

Cincinnati lifts 25-year-old seating ban

CINCINNATI (AP)—The city council on Wednesday lifted a nearly 25-year ban on concert general admission seating that was imposed after 11 fans were crushed to death at a performance by the rock group The Who.

The unanimous decision came after council members said some performers were skipping Cincinnati because they could not have general admission seating, often known as festival seating. They said Cincinnati was the only one among the top 50 cities for concert venues that did not allow festival seating.

The fans were killed Dec. 3, 1979, when The Who was preparing for a concert at Riverfront Coliseum, now U.S. Bank Arena. The deaths and dozens of injuries occurred when fans rushed at closed doors during a late sound check because they thought the show had started.

Festival seating appeals to promoters because it is first-come, first-served, allowing the most enthusiastic fans to get near the stage and generate excitement for the rest of the crowd. Some performers and bands insist on a festival seating area near the stage.

A one-time exemption to Cincinnati's ban was granted for a Bruce Springsteen concert in 2002, and no problems resulted.

Pastimes

Kupchak: Re-signing Bryant not sure thing

By CHRIS SHERIDAN
AP BASKETBALL WRITER



Never again will Shaquille O'Neal wear gold and purple. And if that wasn't stunning enough, consider the idea of Kobe Bryant clad in red. "We have no idea whether Kobe will come back," Lakers general manager Mitch Kupchak acknowledged Wednesday after completing the trade that sent O'Neal to Miami. "We're hopeful that he'll re-sign, but we don't even know that."

Wasn't it just recently that the Lakers were being called—rightly or wrongly—a dynasty? A better term these days might be train wreck.

Another chapter in the disassembly of that so-called dynasty was completed Wednesday, the NBA office giving final approval to the deal sending O'Neal to Miami for Lamar Odom, Caron Butler, Brian Grant and a future No. 1 draft pick.

"The Eastern Conference, outside of Jermaine O'Neal, it's not going to be that difficult to me. So I look forward to it," Shaq said.

The plot line and the date of the next chapter of "As the Lakers Unfurl" will become known soon, though no one—except perhaps the publicly silent Bryant—is certain exactly when.

By trading Melvin Ely and Eddie House to Charlotte for two second-round draft picks, the Clippers have cleared enough salary cap space to offer Bryant a maximum-salary contract of about \$100 million over six years.

The Lakers can offer Bryant a seventh season in a package worth an additional \$30 million, but whatever contract Bryant

signs will presumably have an opt-out clause after the fifth season—making the financial value of the two offers much more comparable.

"My guess at this hour is we've done everything we can do," said Kupchak, who reiterated what he said earlier this summer—that the Lakers will not consider any sign-and-trade deals for Bryant.

"I'm hopeful that he'll make a decision sooner rather than later," Kupchak said. "I don't know if it will be tomorrow. I don't know if it will be Friday. I don't know if it will be next week. If he chooses to take time, he'll take time."

Elsewhere around the league, Rasheed Wallace continued to negotiate with the NBA champion Detroit Pistons, and Erick Dampier was stalling on accepting lucrative offers from Atlanta and Denver in the hope that the New York Knicks would be able to acquire him from Golden State.

One factor working in the Knicks' favor was their willingness to take on Evan Eschmeyer's bloated contract, and there were several multi-team trade possibilities being discussed, an NBA source told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

A number of previously agreed upon free agent deals were signed Wednesday, the first day in two weeks that trades could be made and free agents could sign with new teams.

The only signings not previously reported were minor ones—center Jason Collier joining the Atlanta Hawks, and forward Tamar Slay and guard Jason Hart joining the Bobcats.

The Denver Nuggets and New Jersey Nets continued to discuss trade scenarios involving forward Kenyon Martin, while Vlade



Los Angeles Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal drives to the basket between Miami Heat's Lamar Odom, left and Brian Grant during the first half at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, in this Nov. 16, 2003 photo.

Divac pondered returning to one of his former teams, the Lakers, rather than taking less money from his current team, the Sacramento Kings.

Also, incoming Raptors general manager Rob Babcock reiterated his desire not to trade Vince Carter, but he was vague when asked if Carter's agent, Mark Steinberg, had requested a trade.

"My preference is to have Vince here, but that's up to Vince more than it is up to us," Babcock said.

But by far the biggest news of the day was the blockbuster sending O'Neal to South Florida. It is one of the few times in league history that a dominant center near the peak of his career has been dealt.

"We feel that we have traded for the best player in the NBA," Heat president Pat Riley said, adding that ticket sales for the upcoming season have been brisk. "Over at the business office of the American Airlines Arena, it's like being on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange right now. It's absolutely a frenzy."

Bryant judge bars medical exam evidence

By COLLEEN SLEVIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DENVER (AP)—The judge in the Kobe Bryant sexual assault case on Wednesday barred evidence from a medical exam performed on the NBA star, saying investigators didn't have the proper court order to take him to the hospital in the middle of the night.

District Judge Terry Ruckriegle also rejected prosecutors' claims that Bryant had consented to the exam, saying investigators had officially taken him into custody by then.

The judge did deny a defense request to throw out a 75-minute interview of Bryant by detectives and evidence including a T-shirt stained with the alleged victim's blood. Bryant's attorneys said the material was gathered while he was illegally in custody, but the judge disagreed.

Ruckriegle said Bryant will-

ingly talked to the detectives and gave them some of his clothing.

"There was no evidence of any coercion or undue influence put upon Mr. Bryant to either speak to them or to provide the items from his room," Ruckriegle said.

"We're pleased with the ruling and we consider it an important ruling," prosecution spokeswoman Krista Flannigan said. She did not specifically comment on losing the evidence from the medical exam.

After-hours calls left with Bryant's Denver-based defense team were not immediately returned.

Bryant, 25, has pleaded not guilty to felony sexual assault and faces an Aug. 27 trial. He has said he had consensual sex with a front desk worker, now 20, at the Vail-area resort where she worked last summer.

If convicted, Bryant faces four years to life in prison or 20

years to life on probation, and a fine of up to \$750,000.

Bryant's attorneys have long criticized the Eagle County sheriff's office, saying investigators improperly questioned Bryant and botched the execution of a court order to gather evidence last July.

Prosecutors had argued in favor of submitting the medical exam and the rest of the evidence, saying that it was collected with Bryant's consent the night after the alleged attack.

During a hearing in February, lead investigator Doug Winters acknowledged that Bryant's hospital examination violated Colorado court rules.

Winters and his partner had obtained a type of warrant for "non-testimonial evidence," which usually involves taking samples of hair and fibers. It must be executed during daylight hours to prevent the government from unnecessarily

invading the privacy of citizens. With the departure of three starters, Riley will build his team around O'Neal, Olympian Dwyane Wade and Eddie Jones, Miami's leading scorer each of the last four seasons.

The Heat will now shop for help at both forward positions and backup point guard, and free agents will likely consider Miami a more appealing option with the addition of O'Neal.

"Everybody wants to be here now," said Jones, who played with O'Neal in Los Angeles from 1996 to 1998.

Whether Bryant wants to remain with the Lakers remained the league's biggest mystery.

Kupchak and new Lakers coach Rudy Tomjanovich met with Bryant on Monday night, as did Clippers officials.

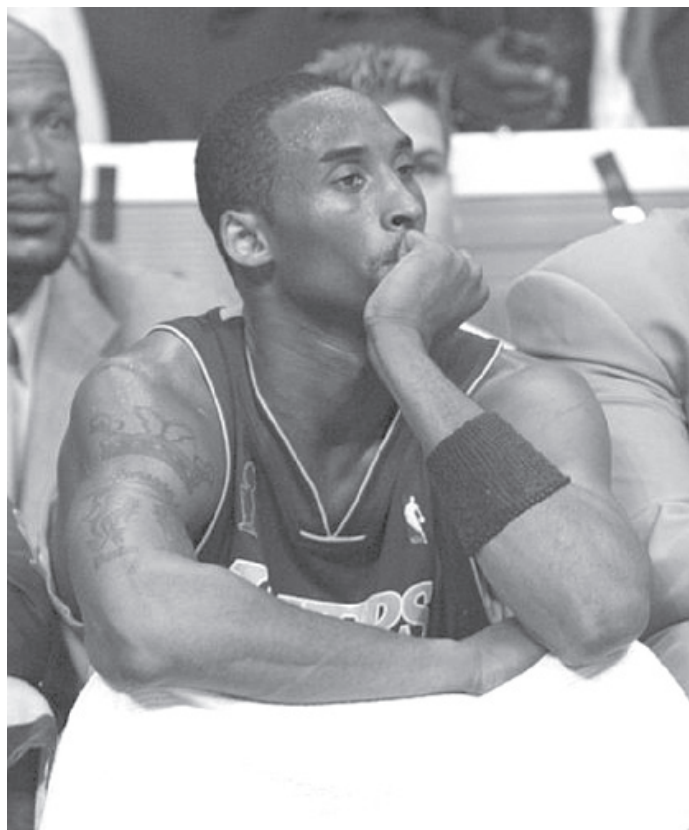
"The meeting went well. I don't have a better feel what he may or may not do," Kupchak said. "Do we have a replacement player in place? No, we don't. You can't replace a Kobe Bryant."

Bryant, who turns 26 next month, joined the Lakers in 1996—the same year O'Neal was signed as a free agent. He goes on trial later this summer in Colorado for felony sexual assault, and a conviction in the courtroom would render moot any decision he makes about where to spend the next five-plus years.

The pair feuded at times, but as one of the top 1-2 punches in NBA history they led the Lakers to three championships (2000-2002) and a berth in the finals this year, where they lost to the Detroit Pistons in five games.

Now, one superstar is gone and the other may be out the door soon.

"Kobe's a free agent," Kupchak said. "There exists the possibility we'll get nothing (if he leaves)."



Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant watches the closing minutes from the bench in Game 5 of the NBA Finals at the Palace of Auburn Hills, Mich., Tuesday, June 15, 2004.

Virenque wins 10th Tour de France stage



Richard Virenque of France is cheered by spectators as he climbs the Col du Puy Marie mountain pass to win the 10th stage of the Tour de France cycling race between Limoges and Saint-Flour, central France, Wednesday, July 14, 2004.

By **JOHN LEICESTER**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**SAINT-
FLOUR,
France**
(AP)—Seven

seconds. That may not seem like much, but in the Tour de France, the advantage Lance Armstrong gained over two rivals Wednesday could be an important step in the Texan's bid for a record sixth straight crown.

At a minimum, Armstrong struck a psychological blow by showing his 32-year-old legs still have enough zip after the Tour's longest stage to outshine Tyler Hamilton and Roberto Heras—former teammates raring to dethrone him. But Armstrong's main rival, Jan Ullrich, was able to keep up.

The German, a Tour winner in 1997 and five-time runner-up, stayed with Armstrong in a sprint to the finish of the first mountain stage. They ended up with the same time.

The glory on Bastille Day went to Frenchman Richard Virenque, who took his seventh stage victory of a spotted career with a strong solo ride, and French champion Thomas Voeckler, who retained the overall lead.

Armstrong still trails Voeckler by 9 minutes and 35 seconds. The 25-year-old Frenchman displayed his resilience by riding

toward the front of main pack for much of the 147-mile trek from Limoges and by outsprinting Armstrong at the finish.

Voeckler placed fifth, Armstrong sixth and Ullrich 15th—the last in a group of 14 riders who finished together 5 minutes and 19 seconds behind Virenque's mark of 6 hours and 24 seconds. Other Armstrong rivals Ivan Basso and Iban Mayo also finished in that bunch.

Armstrong's burst of speed on the uphill finish was to ensure that riders with him didn't open up a gap and gain time. In doing so, he left Hamilton and Heras trailing in a second group of 36 riders who finished seven seconds back.

If the Tour is close, that time may prove precious. The 101-year-old race's narrowest winning margin remains American Greg Lemond's defeat of Frenchman Laurent Fignon in 1989. Last year, Armstrong beat Ullrich by just 61 seconds.

"Remember Fignon? He lost by eight seconds. It can be important," said Johan Bruyneel, sports director of Armstrong's U.S. Postal Service team.

Overall, Armstrong extended his advantage over Hamilton to 43 seconds and over Heras to 1 minute, 52 seconds. Ullrich remained 55 seconds behind Armstrong.

Hamilton's team manager

Urs Freuler said the 33-year-old from Marblehead, Mass., was poorly positioned in the final stretch, "which is why a few seconds were lost."

In a preview of their expected duels to come in the harder Pyrenees and Alps, Armstrong and Ullrich led the main pack up the hardest of nine climbs Wednesday—a 3.5-mile ascent of Le Puy Mary, in the Massif Central region of central France.

While the climb and the stage were the hardest so far, Bruyneel said it was too early to tell whether the Texan is stronger than his challengers.

Armstrong "looked good and sounded good on the radio," Bruyneel said. "It was a hard climb ... but still very far from the finish of the race, so we can't really know now who is good and bad."

Armstrong was one of five riders called for a doping test after the stage and did not talk to reporters.

Virenque's escape took the darling of French cycling fans a step closer to his goal: to become the first seven-time winner of the polka dot jersey as best climber.

Despite his involvement in a 1998 doping scandal, Moroccan-born Virenque is admired for his climbing panache and was cheered on by hundreds of thousands of people lining the route.

He became the 14th Frenchman since World War II to win on Bastille Day and the first since Laurent Jalabert in 2001.

A teary Virenque dedicated his win to a friend who died two days earlier and his grandmother who died in June. He said their memory drove him on.

"It's fabulous, I was at the end of my strength," he said. "I had cramps everywhere."

Virenque and Axel Merckx, the son of five-time Tour champion Eddy Merckx, surged ahead of the main pack at the 22-mile mark and built a lead of more than 10 minutes.

But Virenque overtook the Belgian rider on the 5,897-foot-high Le Puy Mary. In all, he rode for 125 miles ahead of the pack and alone over the last 40 miles to the finish in Saint-Flour. He thrust his arms into the air at the line, pointing to the sky. Merckx, drained, placed 71st, 6 minutes and 18 seconds behind.

At 34, Virenque is approaching the end of a career that could see him hailed as the Tour's best-ever climber. He currently is tied with Spanish rider Federico Bahamontes and Belgian Lucien Van Impe with six mountain titles.

But Virenque also was a member of the Festina squad ejected from the 1998 Tour after customs officers found banned drugs in a team car.

Astros fire Williams after three seasons



HOUSTON (AP)—The Houston Astros made it clear they're making one final push for the post-season, firing manager Jimmy Williams Wednesday and bringing in Phil Garner.

A season that began with World Series aspirations for the Astros has been slipping away, so general manager Gerry Hunsicker wanted an immediate and "dramatic" change.

"There's a cloud that hung over our team for so long," he said. "Time is of the essence. We can't waste too much time here."

Garner, a former Astros player, is taking over on an interim basis. The team will conduct another search at the end of the season.

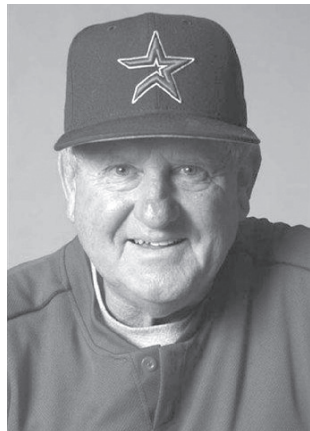
"I'm excited. I'm a Houston boy and I'm looking forward to it," Garner, a former manager with Detroit and Milwaukee, told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "We got some boys on the team that I think can do something really special. This is an opportunity that I've been waiting for."

Williams' job security had been the subject of speculation for about a month, right about the time Houston's surprising slide down the NL Central standings began. He was fired during a clubhouse meeting with Hunsicker, owner Drayton McLane and other team officials.

"He indicated that he was not surprised," McLane said. "He knew something wasn't clicking."

The season began with expectations of the club's first World Series appearance in its 42-year history after the offseason acquisition of former New York Yankees teammates Andy Pettitte and Roger Clemens.

But Houston was 44-44 heading into the All-Star break, a remarkable disappointment for a team that was tops in the NL Central for the first month and a half of the season.



The Houston Astros fired manager Jimmy Williams, shown in this 2004 season photo, and replaced him with Phil Garner on Wednesday July 14, 2004, a last-ditch effort to rescue a season that started with World Series expectations.

LONG BEACH, Calif.

(AP)—Jenny Thompson won the 50-meter freestyle at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials on Wednesday, giving her a second individual event at the Athens Games. She also qualified in the 100 butterfly.

The 31-year-old Thompson was slowest off the block but caught the field during a furious dash to the opposite wall. She won in 25.02 seconds, while Kara Lynn Joyce finished second (25.11) to also claim a second individual spot on the Olympic team.

Thompson will be just the second American swimmer to take part in four Olympics. She has won 10 medals—more than any other woman—but but her eight golds have all been in relays.

Individually, Thompson has been limited to a silver and a bronze, both in the 100 free. She failed to qualify for that event at these trials—Joyce was the upset winner—and conceded that her medal chances in the 50 weren't that strong.

Thompson's winning time was only the eighth-fastest in the world this year.

"Although my 100 free was not what I wanted it to be, I know I can be a lot faster in Athens," she said.

Thompson considered retirement after the 2000 Sydney Games, but decided to come back for one more Olympics.



Jenny Thompson looks back after her win in the Women's 50-meter freestyle final at the U.S. Olympic swim trials in Long Beach, Calif., Wednesday, July 14, 2004. Thompson won with a time of 25.02.

She had to cope with the death of her mother, who succumbed to cancer in February after being a major force in Thompson's swimming career.

Through it all, she insists that she didn't come back to win an Olympic gold.

"It's not what is motivating me," she said. "I just want to end my career on a really positive note."

Thompson said she would be honored to be the swimming team captain, a role that already has spurred lobbying by three-time Olympian Gary Hall Jr.

Larsen Jensen closed a record-breaking meet in appropriate fashion: setting a new American mark in the 1,500 freestyle. He became just the third U.S. man to go under 15 minutes at 14:56.71, overcoming the mark

of 14:56.81 that earned Chris Thompson a bronze medal at the 2000 Olympics.

The 18-year-old Jensen is a rising star of distance swimming, though he'll have his work cut out for him in Athens. The Australians, led by Grant Hackett, have long ruled the longest event in swimming.

"I'm looking forward to racing Grant Hackett in Athens," said Jensen, who already had qualified to swim the 400 free in Athens. "I wasn't sure I was going to be able to finish it. I was hurting so bad."

Erik Vendt claimed the second spot in the 1,500 at 15:11.96. Chris Thompson got into the final because another swimmer scratched but finished far back in seventh at 15:44.57. He

didn't have time to prepare after fracturing both elbows during a May training mishap.

Natalie Coughlin, swimming in the 50 after qualifying in two other events, finished sixth at 25.31. She was swimming the sprint just for fun, figuring it might help her preparations for the 100 freestyle.

"I'm very happy," Coughlin said. "I had three best times in 1 1/2 days and I learned a lot of good things for my 100 free."

Six world records were set during the meet, boding well for American hopes of another big medal haul in Athens. Four years ago, the U.S. team led all nations with 14 golds and 33 medals overall.

Earlier Wednesday, Michael Phelps announced that he would give up one of his individual spots on the Olympic team, the 200 backstroke. He qualified in five other events and, combined with the relays, hopes to equal or break Mark Spitz's record of seven gold medals.

Phelps' decision put Bryce Hunt on the Olympic team. He finished third at the trials behind Aaron Peirsol, who broke his own world record, and Phelps.

"I'm pretty excited," said Hunt, who made his first Olympic team. "People were telling me that he might drop out of the 200 backstroke, but I didn't think it was going to happen. I just hope I can bring back a medal."

Woods aims to regain form at British Open

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP SPORTS COLUMNIST

TROON, Scotland (AP)—Tiger Woods has been hitting fairways this week, and his caddie, Steve Williams, hasn't been hitting anyone.

The British Open doesn't start until Thursday, of course, and things can change just as quickly as the quirky weather off the coast of west Scotland. Woods doesn't need to be reminded of that.

The last time the British Open was held in Scotland, he was not only an overwhelming favorite, but British bookies also fancied him to finish off the Grand Slam that year.

Incredibly, just two years later, he's not even the pick to win this week at Royal Troon. That honor would go to Ernie Els, who just a short time ago seemed baffled by the idea he could actually beat Woods when it really mattered.

Now, it seems, anyone—and that really means anyone—can beat Woods. Eight players have won major championships since he took the U.S. Open at Bethpage, N.Y., in 2002.

With each wayward drive, Woods sinks a little bit more toward mediocrity. The mystique is gone, and so is the intimidation other players used to feel every time he stuck a tee in the ground.

"Pure and simple, he can't drive the ball in the fairway," Nick Price said. "From all I've seen now the last five months, his off-the-tee game is so erratic, and there's no pattern to it because he's losing it right and left. Until such time as he starts getting the ball in the fairway, he's going to struggle.

"You have to be a great driver of the ball to win major championships."

Indeed you do, and Woods once was. Which, of course, brings us to the question of what Woods has been doing to become that great driver again.

Well, he's got a new driver for one, a big fat graphite shafted Nike that's just the type he once



Tiger Woods is seen during practice for the British Open at Royal Troon golf course in Troon, Scotland Wednesday July 14, 2004. The British Open is scheduled to start on Thursday July 15.

AP

scorned. He's longer than ever, but length has never been a problem for Woods.

Presumably he's been out practicing with it, though you might wonder where he's getting the time. He's got a fiancée and an increasing number of business interests and recreational pursuits away from golf.

Some of those are in Las Vegas, where Butch Harmon, his former swing guru, teaches. Woods' visits, though, have nothing to do with getting instruction from his estranged coach.

Last month he jetted there for a few days of gambling after finishing well off the pace at the U.S. Open. And just hours after he finished his final round at the Western Open near Chicago, he was spotted partying at a posh casino nightclub.

Coincidence? Maybe. Woods, like anyone else, has the right to blow off steam. He's certainly earned it after bearing the many responsibilities that came with being Tiger Woods over the last few years.

But Woods became great because of his singular focus on his golf game, as his father, Earl Woods, would be more than willing

to tell you. He became great by constant hours of practicing to come up with a short game as great as the shots he could seemingly manufacture at will off the tee.

Whether the same focus is still there is hard to figure out. Woods doesn't let anyone inside his private life, and he's not about to tell anyone what he's doing.

But if last month's U.S. Open is any indication, there are cracks in the armor. At Shinnecock Hills, Woods feuded publicly with Harmon even while his drives were going sideways, and he wasn't a factor on the weekend.

At the same time, his caddie became so annoyed at a photographer that he kicked his camera, then later went into the crowd and grabbed another one from an astonished spectator.

The boss doesn't like distractions, you know.

"I've always played my best when I've gone out and played—and stayed—focused on what I have to do and not worry about anything else," Woods said Tuesday.

Woods didn't say much else. He's become more taciturn than ever, insisting as always that everything is fine, while at the

same time refusing to be drawn into any specifics about his game or his swing.

Harmon speculated at the U.S. Open that his former student was in a "bit of denial" about everything, a statement that angered Woods mostly because it was made publicly.

Since then, Woods and Harmon have chatted and Woods said they patched up some of their differences. None of that chat concerned his golf swing, though, and Woods still stubbornly clings to the notion he can fix things himself.

Maybe he can. Maybe Woods knows something no one else knows and will find a way to do something he hasn't done since last October—win a stroke-play tournament.

Winning, of course, is the best way to quiet critics. If Woods can win his second British Open, people will quickly quit talking about his slump and return to talking about his chances of beating Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 major championship titles.

And maybe his caddie will get a clue and quit bullying people on his way around the course.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS		PHILADELPHIA EAGLES-Signed G Adrien Clarke to a four-year contract and LB Jeremiah Trotter to a one-year contract.
MLB		Olympics
HOUSTON ASTROS-Fired Jimmy Williams, manager; Burt Hooton, pitching coach; and Harry Spilman, hitting coach. Named Phil Garner manager, Jim Hickey pitching coach, and Gary Gaetti hitting coach.		U.S. OLYMPIC MEN'S ROAD CYCLING TEAM-Announced Levi Leipheimer will replace Lance Armstrong.
NBA		College
ATLANTA HAWKS-Signed C Jason Collier.		AUBURN-Named Casey Dunn assistant baseball coach.
BOSTON CELTICS-Re-signed C Mark Blount to a six-year contract.		DARTMOUTH-Named Maribel Sanchez Souther women's cross country coach.
CHARLOTTE BOBCATS-Signed G Jason Hart and F Tamar Slay.		EVERGREEN STATE-Named Kim Farnsworth athletic trainer.
DALLAS MAVERICKS-Re-signed G Marquis Daniels to a five-year contract with a team option.		HOUSTON-Named John Severance women's tennis coach.
DETROIT PISTONS-Signed F Antonio McDyess to a four-year contract with a team option and G-F Carlos Delfino to a three-year contract with a team option.		N.J. CITY-Named Bridgette Quimpo softball coach.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS-Re-signed C Adonal Foyle to a six-year contract.		NORTH DAKOTA STATE-Named Eric Viney women's assistant volleyball coach.
LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS-Traded F-C Melvin Ely and G Eddie House to Charlotte for 2005 and 2006 second-round draft picks.		NORTHWESTERN-Announced men's junior basketball F Bernard Cote will transfer from Kentucky.
LOS ANGELES LAKERS-Traded C Shaquille O'Neal to Miami for F Lamar Odom, F Caron Butler, F-C Brian Grant and a future first-round draft pick.		OKLAHOMA-Named Bill Pink director of women's basketball operations.
MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES-Signed F Brian Cardinal to a six-year contract.		PALM BEACH ATLANTIC-Announced the resignation of Chris Bizol, men's and women's tennis coach, to take a position with Texas-Tyler.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS-Signed C Etan Thomas to a six-year offer sheet.		RHODE ISLAND-Announced the resignation of Boe Pearman, women's basketball coach.
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS-Signed F Brian Skinner to a multiyear contract.		SANTA CLARA-Named M. Felipe Montoro assistant cross country coach and Steve Drake women's assistant basketball coach.
PHOENIX SUNS-Signed G Quentin Richardson to a six-year offer sheet. Signed G Steve Nash to a six-year contract.		SETON HALL-Named Gerson Echeverry men's assistant soccer coach.
SAN ANTONIO SPURS-Re-signed F Bruce Bowen. Signed G Beno Udrih.		SKIDMORE-Named Darren Bennett women's basketball coach.
TORONTO RAPTORS-Signed G Rafer Alston to a five-year contract.		ST. FRANCIS, PA.-Named Wylie Crisanti women's lacrosse coach.
UTAH JAZZ-Signed F Carlos Boozer and C Mehmet Okur to six-year offer sheets. Re-signed G Carlos Arroyo to a four-year contract.		TULSA-Named Christy Connoyer softball coach.
NFL		WRIGHT STATE-Named Rob Cooper baseball coach.
GREEN BAY PACKERS-Voided the trade of DE Jamal Reynolds to Indianapolis after Reynolds failed his physical and waived him.		
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS-Released S Jason Perry.		

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

RESTAURANT LEAGUE STANDINGS		
Angel Wings	3	0
Country House	3	1
Jollibee	3	1
Capricciosa	2	1
Keeraku	1	2
LSG Sky Chefs	0	3
El Segundo	0	4

Armstrong, UConn pair win ESPY Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong was a repeat winner as male athlete of the year, and Connecticut basketball stars Diana Taurasi and Emeka Okafor were also honored Wednesday night at the 12th annual ESPY Awards.

Armstrong is currently attempting to win the Tour de France for the sixth straight time.

Taurasi won the best college female athlete for the second straight year as well as the best female athlete, while Okafor was chosen the best male college athlete. The two led their respective teams to NCAA championships last spring.

For the first time, fans determined the winners in all 36 categories, including the

19 cross-cutter honors that pit athletes from different sports against each other. More than 10 1/2 million votes were cast between June 21 and July 9.

Armstrong was honored as the best male athlete over home run king Barry Bonds, quarterbacks Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, and NBA star Kevin Garnett.

Taurasi was selected over golfer Annika Sorenstam and tennis star Justine Henin-Hardenne in the female athlete of the year category.

The Detroit Pistons, who beat the Los Angeles Lakers in last month's NBA Finals, were picked as the best team over the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, World Series-winning Florida Marlins, Stanley

Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning and the UConn men's and women's basketball teams.

Detroit's Larry Brown won the best coach/manager award, and the Pistons were the winners in the new best upset category.

Among other winners were Cleveland Cavaliers star LeBron James, best breakthrough athlete; Masters champion Phil Mickelson, best male golfer and top championship performance; Manning, best NFL player; Garnett, best NBA player; Lauren Jackson, best WNBA player, Antonio Tarver, best boxer; Stewart Elliott, best jockey; Andy Roddick, best male tennis player, Gail Devers, female track and field, and Serena Williams, best female tennis player.

Golfer Tiger Woods, a winner of a record 15 ESPY awards, didn't win one for the first time since 1999. Bonds and Sorenstam rank second all-time with six such awards. Bonds won as best baseball player and Sorenstam as best female golfer.

George Weah, best known for his achievements on the soccer field, received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award for his humanitarian efforts in his war ravaged homeland of Liberia and other African countries.

The Ashe award is traditionally given to an athlete whose contributions transcend sports.

The ceremony was held at the Kodak Theater and will be televised Sunday by ESPN at 9 p.m. (EDT).

Prosecutor asks to retry Jayson Williams

FLEMINGTON, N.J. (AP)—The prosecutor in the Jayson Williams manslaughter case wants to retry the former NBA star in Hunterdon County.

In papers filed with the trial judge on Wednesday, First Assistant Hunterdon County Prosecutor Steven Lember argued that the retrial should be moved to Hunterdon County, where limousine driver Costas Christofi was killed by a blast from a shotgun handled by Williams.

"Just as the perceived existence of pretrial publicity led the court to change venue to Somerset County, the even-more extensive trial publicity in Somerset County necessitates a return to Hunterdon County," Lember wrote.

Superior Court Judge Edward Coleman moved the first trial to Somerset County because of extensive pretrial publicity.

The 36-year-old Williams was acquitted in April of ag-

gravated manslaughter, aggravated assault and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, but was convicted on four counts related to his efforts to cover up the shooting.

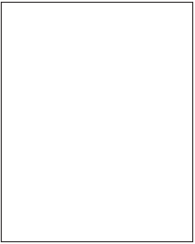
The jury deadlocked on the remaining reckless manslaughter count and a mistrial was declared. Lember decided to retry the case on that one charge.

The retrial is scheduled to start Jan. 10 in Somerville.

Christofi died in 2002 in Williams' Alexandria Township mansion.

If the judge denies Lember's request for a change of venue, the prosecutor has asked that a jury be brought in from a neighboring county with demographics similar to Hunterdon.

Lember will ask Coleman to reconsider his decision not to allow testimony about Williams' prior gun use, including the alleged shooting of his dog.



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Sports

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